WWI

LEGENDS ON HORSEBACK
Australian mounties in 1917 Palestine

WWII

RAF BOMBER OFFENSIVE
Vital to the war or wasted effort?

ROAD TO WWI

BATTLE FOR TRIPOLI
The opening struggle of the Italo-Turkish War

MILITARY HISTORY MONTHLY

www.military-history.org

September 2013 | Issue 36 | £3.95

PICKETT'S CHARGE

The greatest infantry attack in American history

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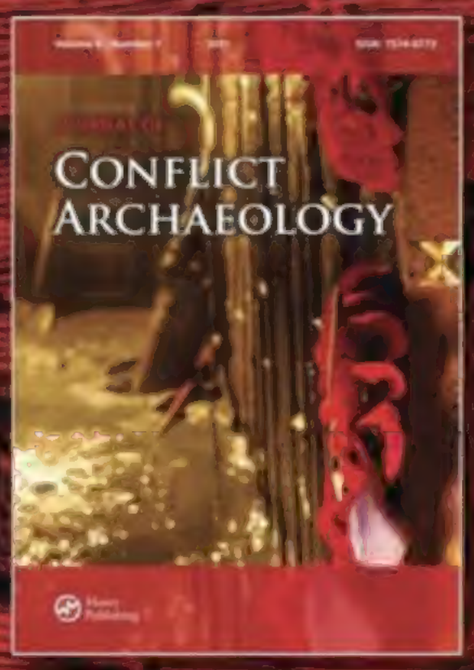

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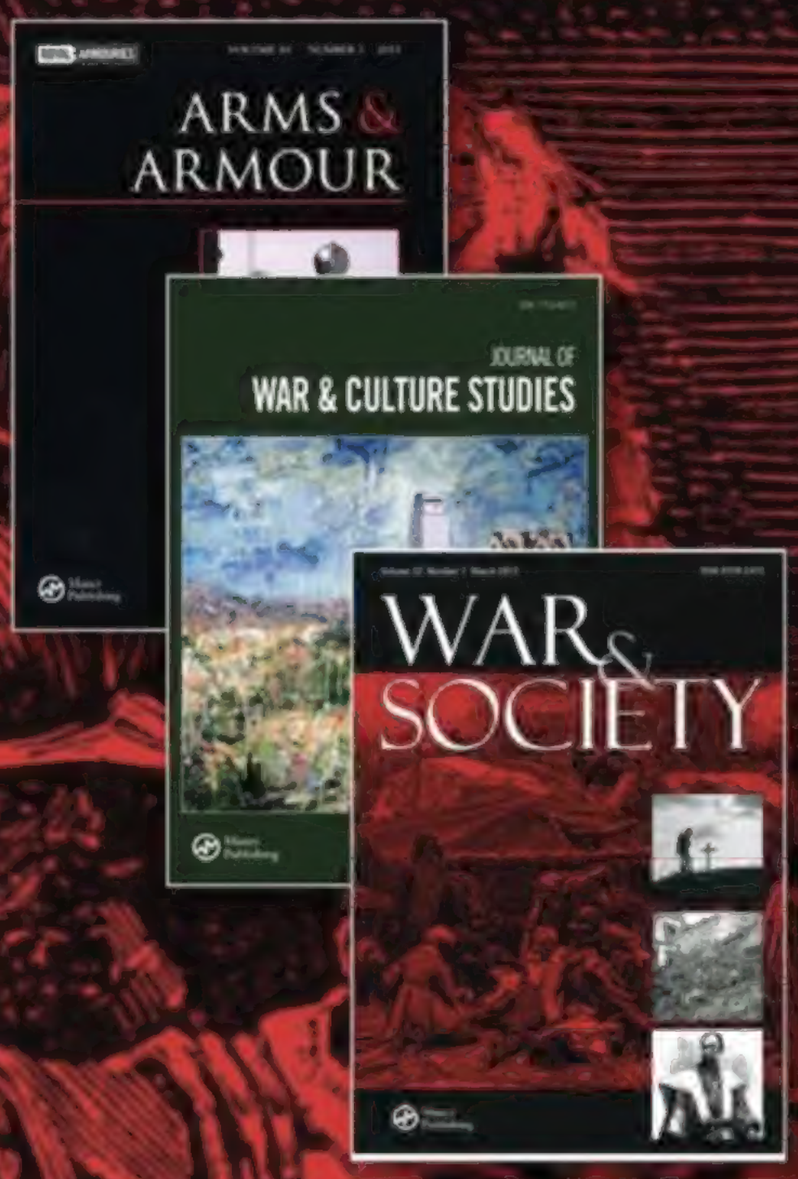

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ON THE COVER: Union men hold the line on Cemetery Ridge against Pickett's 15,000 Rebel assailants on the third day of Gettysburg.

Photo: Library of Congress

Welcome

By Dr Neil Faulkner

The countdown to the centenary of the First World War has begun. Broadcasters have commissioned numerous documentaries and dramas. New books are in press, old classics are being reprinted, and newspapers and magazines are brainstorming coverage.

Museums, led by the Imperial War Museum, are revamping their displays. History and archaeology societies are planning research projects. The government is doling out millions, and arguments have erupted over whether it is for 'celebration' or 'commemoration'.

What is it about the First World War? Why, a century later, does it have such significance?

It was the beginning of what Gabriel Kolko called 'a century of war'. There had been no full-scale European war since 1815. Industrial capitalism was booming and living standards were rising. *La belle époque* Europe was a 'never-had-it-so-good' world of prosperity, self-confidence, and seeming tranquillity.

The explosion of 1914 obliterated that age of innocence. It turned the achievements of civilisation into a monstrous mechanism of destruction. It devoured 15 million people in four years of industrialised warfare only to produce 'a peace to end all peace' that led to a yet greater world war.

Over the next five years, with the support of a wide range of contributors, often with radically divergent views, *Military History Monthly* will be at the centre of the debates.

We begin with a series of articles examining the major regional wars that heralded the coming storm in the years leading up to 1914. First off, Julian Spilsbury analyses the little-known Italo-Turkish War in Libya in 1911-1912. Also in this issue with a First World War theme, Neil Dearberg pays homage to the Australian Light Horse.

Despite the growing First World War focus, *MHM* will remain broad-ranging. This issue, therefore, we have the concluding part of Julian Brazier's series on Gettysburg, the first of three articles on British grand strategy in 1943, and a thought-provoking piece that questions the 'blitzkrieg' character of the 1939 invasion of Poland.

Neil Faulkner.

Who we are:

Military History Monthly aims to cover conflict on land, at sea, and in the air through all periods of history, with expert commentary written in an intelligent and accessible way.

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We would love to hear your opinions on this issue of the magazine. What are your favourite bits? What should we cover in the next issue? You can give us your feedback:

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MILITARY HISTORY MONTHLY

Military History Monthly
Issue 36, September 2013
www.military-history.org

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SUBSCRIPTIONS
UK: £36.95 (12 issues) **RoW:** £46.95 (12 issues)
Back issues: £4.50 each / £5.50 non-UK (inc p&p)
Binders: (hold 12 copies) £15 / £20
Slip Cases: (hold 12 copies) £15 / £20

***Military History Monthly* Subscriptions**
Lamb House, Church Street, London, W4 2PD
Tel: 020 8819 5580 **Fax:** 020 8819 5589
subs@military-history.org
www.military-history.org/subscriptions

NEWS DISTRIBUTION
UK & Rest of World: COMAG, Tavistock Road, West Drayton, UB7 7QE **Tel:** 01895 444 055

Printed in England by William Gibbons
Military History Monthly (ISSN 2048-4100) is published monthly by Current Publishing Ltd, Lamb House, Church Street, London, W4 2PD

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DISPATCHES

Our round-up of this month's military history news stories.

MILITARY CAMP AT THE NEW FOREST

Historian Dan Snow has opened a new exhibit telling the story of how the New Forest was turned into a military camp during WWII.

The 'New Forest Remembers' WWII exhibit reveals how local people's lives were transformed by the conflict, which turned previously quiet woodland into store depots and military camps housing thousands of Commonwealth and American troops in the build-up to D-Day.

Italian and German prisoners-of-war worked alongside local timber workers, while bouncing bombs were tested by the Dambuster squadron on land-targets at Ashley Walk. Here too was the site where the biggest bomb ever dropped by British Forces was first tested – the 22,000lb 'Grand Slam' earthquake bomb.

The exhibit includes a replica Nissen hut, original uniforms worn by New Forest lumberjills, and a large-scale interactive map showing key sites in the forest during the conflict. Visitors can 'listen in' on a housewife's conversation about wartime home life, based on oral histories from local people.

A number of period vehicles were also on site to mark the opening, including an aircraft recovery vehicle, an American Jeep, and a number of Austin 7 cars.

Dan Snow, who lives in the New Forest, remarked at the opening: 'The story of places like Beaulieu and Buckler's Hard, particularly in the Second World War, is of interest to us because it is local history. But by quirk of fate and geography, what happened here in the New Forest matters not just for us, but is globally significant. That's what we're here to celebrate today: the stories of these people, because they were playing their part in one of the greatest struggles against tyranny the world has ever seen.'

Above Dan Snow at the opening of the 'New Forest Remembers' WWII exhibit.

The exhibit has been brought to life thanks to the 'New Forest Remembers – Untold Stories of World War II' project run by the New Forest National Park Authority.

With funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and Exxon Mobil at Fawley, archaeologists and volunteers have been collecting the memories of more than 170 military personnel, residents, and prisoners-of-war, unearthing previously unseen photos and maps, and surveying WWII sites from the air using lasers.

Terry Gittoes remembered as a ten-year-old seeing hundreds of landing craft and ships in the Lymington River in the run-up to the Normandy Landings, and how the New Forest felt like a 'ghost town' after their departure.

Terry, 81, from Sarisbury Green, near Fareham in Hampshire, remembered: 'When the Americans arrived, you couldn't see across the Lymington River for all the landing craft. One of the captains, Bob Horton, always allowed us on board for a run around. We had doughnuts and fruit cocktails, which we'd never had before.

'Then one night we heard this tremendous noise, and when we looked the following morning all the planes from the airfield and all the ships in the river and Solent had all suddenly vanished. They'd all gone to Normandy.'

Julian Johnson, chairman of the New Forest National Park Authority, said: 'WWII left its mark on the people and landscape of the New Forest. You can still see the outline of bomb craters, camp buildings, and military roads on the forest floor, and for many who lived through the conflict the memories are just as vivid today as they were 70 years ago. But many are in their 80s and 90s, and I'm delighted that their stories will now be passed onto the younger generations.'

Much of the 'New Forest Remembers' WWII exhibit can also be found at *www.newforestww2.org*, a digital portal full of interviews, photos, letters, diaries, film footage, and animated 3D reconstructions. Members of the public can add their own stories and memories to this portal.

CALL TO ACTION

Thanks to a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant of almost £300,000, the Fusiliers Museum of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle can now get its 'Call to Action' project under way.

The museum tells the story of a north-east regiment with a record of 340 years of continuous service, from its origin in 1674 to the present-day. Known in its time as the 5th of Foot, and as the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers, it is now part of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

As part of the project, the Fusiliers Museum will be recruiting an Activities Officer with a brief to bring the museum to life with activities for young visitors, and to develop outreach activities for a range of other groups. The Activities Officer will also have responsibility for supporting volunteers and recruiting new members to the existing volunteer team.

The new recruit will begin by working with volunteers on developing a special exhibition to mark the centenary of the First World War. The exhibition, on the museum's ground floor, will run for three years. It will commemorate the service of the Northumberland Fusiliers, who raised 52 battalions in WWI, and look at the links between soldiers on service and their families at home. There will be events and activities for young people and families, and opportunities to handle objects from the museum's collections.

The two upper floors of the museum are to be refurbished and brought up to date. They will trace themes from the regiment's history over three centuries and tell stories of people and personalities from the regiment, their service, and, in some cases, their later lives.

Volunteers will play a vital role. Whether researching, developing, or presenting community-based projects, demonstrations, and talks, they will ensure a lasting legacy for 'Call to Action'.

Ivor Crowther, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund North East, remarked: 'In the run-up to the centenary of the First World War, we are remembering the sacrifices made by men and women across the country more than ever. The "Call to Action" project will provide a great opportunity for everyone to explore the stories of local people involved in the conflict and learn about what life was like during the war. We at the Heritage Lottery Fund are proud to be supporting this important project.'

John Armstrong, the Chair of the Museum Trustees, commented, 'The museum is so grateful for the support of the Heritage Lottery Fund. HLF support means that the museum can mark the service of the soldiers of the Northumberland Fusiliers in the First World War with a special exhibition and activities, something so important for the museum to do. And now we're really looking forward to developing volunteering, doing more in the community, and telling our story better for everyone – all thanks to HLF support.'

Top Members of the 53rd (Young Soldier) Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers, 1917.
Below 20th Battalion (Tyneside Scottish) Northumberland Fusiliers training at Salisbury Plain.

NEWS IN BRIEF

STOCKPORT'S AIR RAID SHELTERS

Guests attending the recent official launch of Stockport's Air Raid Shelters in the Plaza Theatre experienced a compellingly reconstructed air raid and evacuation.

After extensive refurbishment, the Air Raid Shelters were reopened with a wonderful launch event, hosted in partnership with the nearby theatre. Guests were invited to the Plaza for the screening of a film about the refurbishment. The theme of the event was capturing a moment in time, aiming to give guests an insight in to what life was like during the Second World War when the threat of enemy bombing raids was an ever-present reality.

The launch was attended by around 100 guests, including the Mayor of Stockport, Councillor Chris Murphy, representatives of the local Armed Forces regiments, the Royal British Legion, Help for Heroes, and cultural and tourism professionals from the north-west.

RETURN OF MAGNA CARTA

For the first time in British history, the remaining original pieces of the documents that gave birth to the freedoms and liberties on which Britain was founded will be reunited under one roof. The original copies of the 'Great Charter' or Magna Carta are nearly eight centuries old, and their unification in 2015, after so many years, will be a hugely sinificant event

The British Library has announced that the surviving copies of the Magna Carta will come together for only three days to mark the anniversary of their signing.

FLYING LEGENDS SUCCESS

At the renowned Flying Legends Air Show thousands of visitors from all over the world enjoyed thrilling flying displays and a nostalgic atmosphere. In the Vintage Village, visitors enjoyed singing performances by New York-based Andrews Sisters-style group The Manhattan Dolls and swinging big-band tunes from the Wilmslow Concert Band.

Members of living-history groups representing Second World War RAF pilots from the Battle of Britain, US Army medical personnel, and US Parachute Infantry chatted to visitors and brought a 1940s feel to the historic airfield with their authentic uniforms and displays.

Representing Luftwaffe aircraft were a Junkers Ju-52 and a Bücker Jungmann. This was followed by a celebration of naval aviation with a Sea Fury and the Flying Bulls' F4U-4 Corsair. Two rare Gloster Gladiator biplanes flew together for the first time anywhere in the world in another unique moment for this Flying Legends Air Show.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NORTH AFRICAN CAMPAIGN

Alistair Dey challenges some common misconceptions regarding the fighting in North Africa between 1940 and 1943.

Views of Britain's role in WWII seem to be undergoing a transformation. During the 1950s, the popular belief was that Britain had won the war virtually single-handed (with a bit of late assistance from the USA). Since the end of the Cold War, this has gradually been replaced by the equally misleading claim that the Soviets bore almost the entire burden, and crushed Germany while the Western allies did little but make encouraging noises. One of the consequences of this has been to downplay the importance of the fighting in North Africa during 1940-1943.

My purpose here is to challenge some of the more extreme examples of this new orthodoxy, and hopefully establish a balanced picture concerning three notions in particular.

'The campaign was militarily insignificant. During most of it, the Germans deployed only three divisions, while around 180 were stationed in Russia.'

True as regards the numbers of German troops, but otherwise highly misleading. It ignores the large Italian presence in the theatre, which sparked off the campaign in the first place. It also oversimplifies the German position. Virtually all their units were armoured or motorised (like the British but unlike some of the Italians), including their supply and support services. This made them far more formidable than the majority of German formations in Russia, which still depended heavily on marching infantry and horse-drawn transport. It also made them far more expensive and difficult to resource.

An appreciation of this is vital. Even in Russia, troops could usually obtain some of their food and most of their water locally. By contrast, in the desert, virtually everything had to be brought in from elsewhere.

This was not the only problem. Supplies and reinforcements to Russia generally came by train from Germany to the railhead, and were then shifted to the front by truck or horse. Awkward enough, but nowhere near as risky as a voyage across the Mediterranean under threat from the Royal Navy and the RAF. Even those supplies which reached port, still faced a potential journey of several hundred kilometres by truck, burning up fuel and wearing out vehicles all the way.

In short, while it is true that the Afrika Korps totalled less than 2% of the Wehrmacht's strength, it represented a much greater percentage of its fighting potential and absorbed an even greater proportion of its resources. Beyond this, the North African theatre imposed a heavy and ultimately unsupportable burden on Germany's weaker partner, Italy.

'The Campaign was an unnecessary sideshow that diverted British and Allied attention from truly vital areas elsewhere.'

At first sight there is something in this. Neither the Suez Canal nor the Middle Eastern oilfields were absolutely crucial to Britain's survival. Both were, however, valuable enough to fight to retain and to deny to the enemy. It is true that defeating the Axis in Africa would not end the war; only a decisive confrontation on European soil could do that. But in 1941-1942, Britain was incapable of such an effort.

> Even units that had theoretically been surrounded stood a good chance of breaking clear.

This left the British with three options: to build up their forces at home, leaving them effectively unemployed for several years; to launch a premature and probably suicidal invasion of Western Europe; or to commit more troops to the only theatre in which they were actually in contact with the enemy.

Not surprisingly, they chose the latter option. And they were right to do so. The North African campaign absorbed a high proportion of Britain's military resources, but during 1941-1942 these could not have been more productively deployed elsewhere. In the end, the Allies destroyed a sizeable German army, and left Mussolini's Italy so exhausted that his regime collapsed a few months later.

'The British, and particularly Montgomery, failed to exploit their successes and should have beaten the Axis armies much sooner.'

The tactical shortcomings of the British forces have often been rightly condemned. Unlike the Germans, they frequently failed to coordinate their efforts, committing units to battle piecemeal and unsupported, squandering their numerical advantage. In fact Montgomery was less guilty of this than his predecessors. His victory at El Alamein was more bludgeon than rapier, but other British generals had enjoyed an almost equal superiority and had still lost.

The charge that he allowed the Axis to escape after the battle is largely based on misapprehensions about desert warfare. In North Africa the theatre of operations was vast, while the forces involved were too small to maintain a continuous line (except where the terrain was unusually constricted, as it was during the fighting at El Alamein).

There were nearly always gaps through which an advancing attacker or a retreating defender could have passed. Even units that had theoretically been surrounded stood a good chance of breaking clear, provided they were mobile enough. The Germans did so after the British 'Crusader' offensive battles of November-December 1941, and again once the front had dissolved at El Alamein in November 1942. The British likewise escaped after the battle of Gazala (part of Rommel's summer offensive of May-June 1942). Prior to the final Axis capitulation in May 1943, only the Italians had suffered a total, annihilating defeat after Wavell's offensive in December 1940.

While the Desert Campaign was not the largest or most decisive theatre during WWII, it would be wrong to say that it was unimportant. Overall, this was a valuable contribution to the ultimate Allied victory, and should be celebrated as such.

Jersey Military Vehicles

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A CHILD OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The human touch: stories of war and conflict from readers of *MHM*.

Susie Kearley is a freelance writer and journalist.

Maureen Knopp, from Princes Risborough in Buckinghamshire, was seven years old when the Second World War began. Here, she tells Susie Kearley of her wartime memories.

Above Maureen Knopp in 2013.
Below left Maureen as a bridesmaid, aged 11.

My dad spent 25 years in the Royal Navy, and was posted to Canada to serve with the Canadian Navy for two years in the early 1930s. I missed him so much that when he returned, I just fell into his arms. We really bonded. I loved my dad, but over the years our close relationship caused friction with my mum, who said I always took his side!

When he came home from Canada that day, he kissed mum, but she was so used to seeing him go off on military duties that she already seemed to be expecting him to go away again.

By 1940 my dad was working in a factory where they used oil to generate heat in the production process. When war broke out, the factory had to revert to using wood, sawdust, and coal to generate heat instead, as all the oil was needed for military operations. The factory also switched from producing consumer products to manufacturing military aircraft to support the war effort.

As talk of war accelerated, I was worried that my dad would have to leave us again, and I remember crying for almost three solid days. I'm not the type who cries very often and I wept in private, keeping my fears to myself because I didn't want to worry him. So you can imagine how delighted I was when the news arrived that he was exempt from military service! Apparently his skills were too valuable in the factory.

Dad was used to dealing with coal. In fact, he was the only person at the factory who knew how to manage the furnaces used for making propellers and other aircraft parts. He may have been excused from fighting, but all the while he was working in the factory, he never had a holiday.

He was, however, allowed time off work to go to hospital after developing a hernia from lifting the heavy fuel into the factory furnace. In his absence the factory struggled to operate effectively, so when he was in hospital, they were frequently contacting him to ask questions. If anything went wrong, the first thing they would do would be to call him in hospital and ask for advice.

I went to sit with him in hospital, and we talked about so many things that we would never normally have discussed. It was a time I remember with great warmth. I loved my dad, and I valued those moments with him.

Gas masks and hidden stories

Away from my dad and the factory, my life went on as usual. I had to go to school, and we all took gas masks and medical supplies with us every day. The gas masks were made of horrible stinky material and I used to complain that I would rather die than have to wear mine!

My brother went to school on the train, and my sister worked in the factory near the railway station. Every time a US aircraft flew past our home, mum was worried that it was an enemy bomber.

Unexploded bombs dropped around the school, and we used to wish one of them would go off and destroy the school so that we didn't have to go. Of course, they would have sent us to school over the road in the cold, dull Methodist church instead, but we weren't thinking that at the time.

We used to go down to the railway station and wave the soldiers off when they went to war. Little did we realise that some of them wouldn't come back. On other occasions, I would stand by the bridge near my home, watching the trains go past. The soldiers were all going off in first-class carriages

Top Princes Risborough as it is today.
Inset Just 40 miles from London, Princes Risborough was extremely lucky to emerge relatively free of any war-damage.

and I thought that they had probably never been in first-class before.

At home, we lived with the radio on all the time, listening for the updates on the war effort and hoping to hear good news. We had newspapers too. Sometimes they had to be hidden from us children, because the news was too gruesome. I remember one newspaper from April 1945, when Mussolini was killed and the newspaper carried a picture of him executed and hanging upside down on the front page. How did I know about this? Well, whenever the newspaper was missing, we knew there was something we shouldn't see inside. This made it all the more fascinating, so we would search high and low until we found it.

There was no television in those days, but we used to see Pathé newsreels at the cinema, and I remember watching them when Britain first bombed Berlin. The giant screen showed lions from the Berlin Zoo strolling over the rubble. Some of lions were injured, and that memory has always stayed in my mind.

In the garden at home, we all had to 'dig for victory', and we never bought a potato, onion, or carrot from a shop. We used to grow food in the summer, and pack the vegetables in sand to preserve them for the winter. Remarkably, we never seemed to have much trouble with garden pests – there was the odd hole in our carrots, but overall it was a pretty successful harvest for the full six years of war.

At night we watched thousands of planes as they flew over to bomb Germany, and we tried to count them as they went. It wasn't scary, though – it was just how life was in those days, and I took it all for granted.

Air raids and rations

When the air-raid sirens sounded, we had to go down to the dug-out air-raid shelter in our back garden. Mum said we had to wear as many clothes possible, telling us to put on five pairs of knickers, four jumpers, and so on. Then we left in haste to the protection of the air-raid shelter. On one occasion there was a frog in the shelter. I didn't like frogs, and refused to go inside after that, so mum sheltered me under the big old table in the kitchen instead.

We had blacked-out windows like everyone else. It had to be done, and it just became a way of life.

I also remember the 'Wings for Victory' weeks, where people were encouraged to invest their money in National Saving Schemes that would provide funds to support the war effort.

I obviously didn't like the rations – who did? We were limited to two ounces of sweets a week and that was hard going. But in amongst all the drama, the unexploded bombs, and those moments of uncertainty about our future as a nation, there was a great sense of community. We all pulled together and it was a good feeling. Unfortunately, it was such a long time ago that many of the people I knew then are now dead. Most of the surviving WWII veterans are in their 90s now.

After the war, Winston Churchill came to Princes Risborough and I shook hands with him. So did my dad. He was highly respected as a wartime prime minister, so I never really understood why he lost the election that year and his popularity seemed to wane.

Looking back, it's remarkable that the town survived as well as it did. Princes Risborough is just 40 miles from London and it could have been much worse. There was a landmine found in one local village, and some unexploded bombs around my school, but nothing worse than that. We didn't really feel locally that there was much for us to worry about.

I don't have many photographs from that time in my life because during the 1940s camera film was a rarity. I think they needed the film for military purposes and family snapshots were not a priority.

It was a relief when the rationing finally ended and the supplies started to filter through. My dad lived into his 80s and I was back at his bedside when he passed away at the age of 83.

GETTYSBURG

Part 4

THE THIRD DAY

Julian Brazier completes his series on Gettysburg with an analysis of the most famous infantry attack in American history: Pickett's charge.

At 6 o'clock on the evening of 2 July 1863, the second day of Gettysburg, an aide to the one-legged General Ewell, commander of the Confederate 2nd Corps, scrambled down from the cupola of Gettysburg's Catholic church to report on the echelon attack by 1st and 3rd Corps on Cemetery Ridge: 'Things are going splendidly, General. We are driving them back everywhere.'

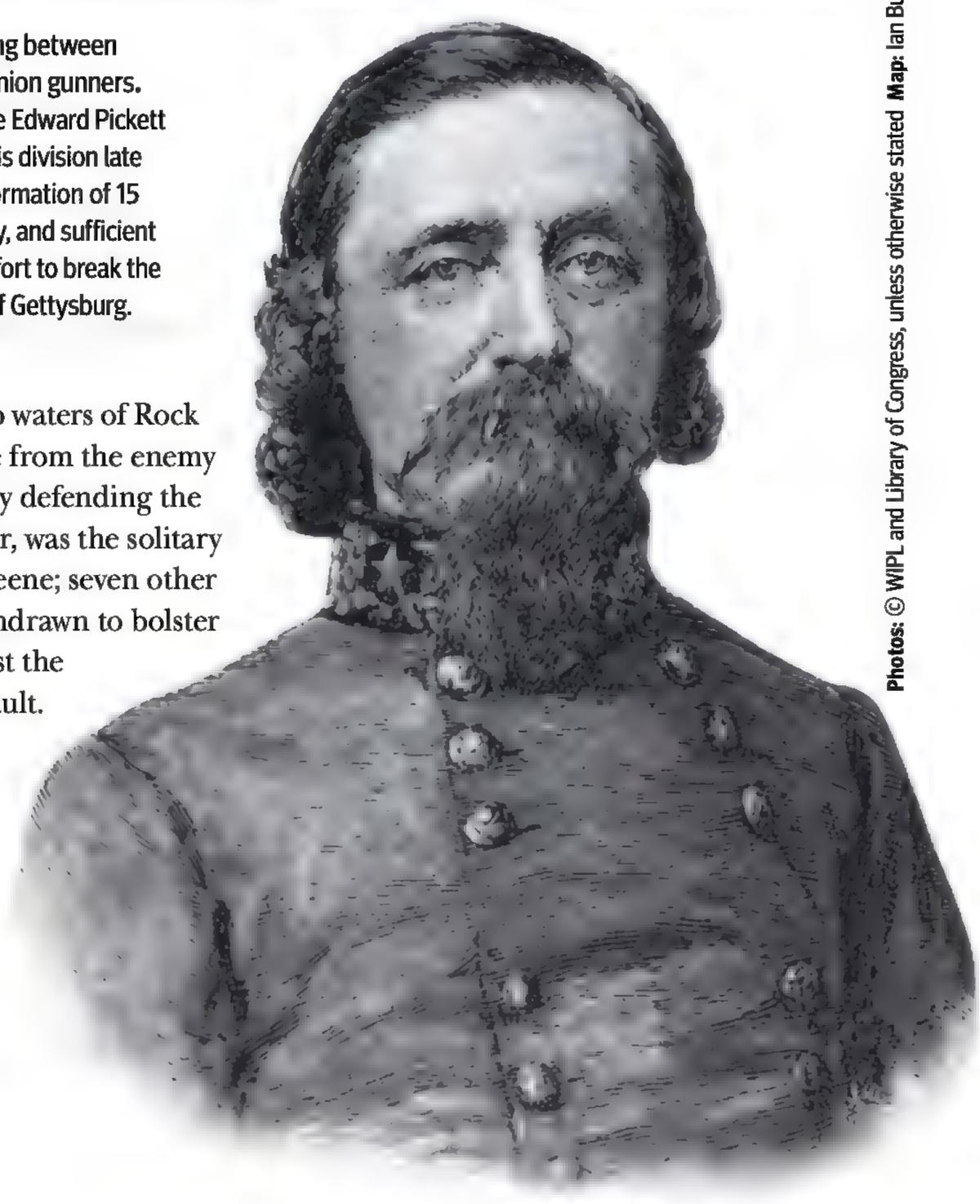
But it was already past 6pm, and that assault was breaking down when General Ewell regained his headquarters and gave orders for his three divisions to attack: Johnson's against Culp's Hill, and those of Early and Rodes against Cemetery Hill.

Two hours earlier his artillery had opened up promptly from Seminary Ridge and from Benner's Hill opposite Culp's to the east, in token support for the main offensive. Heavily outgunned and firing uphill, the Benner's Hill batteries had withdrawn as their ammunition ran out, having suffered heavy losses and the death of their commander.

The sun was low as Johnson's division moved forward at 6.45pm, his men crossing the waist-deep waters of Rock Creek under heavy fire from the enemy guns. The only infantry defending the east of the hill, however, was the solitary brigade of General Greene; seven other brigades had been withdrawn to bolster Cemetery Ridge against the main Confederate assault.

But 'Grandpa' Greene, a US Engineer turned wealthy contractor, had purchased picks and shovels for his soldiers, and they had turned the rocky, tree-covered slopes into a fortress.

Above Hand-to-hand fighting between Confederate infantry and Union gunners. **Right** Major-General George Edward Pickett (1825-1875). The arrival of his division late on 2 July gave Lee a fresh formation of 15 battalions of Virginia infantry, and sufficient strength for a final all-out effort to break the Union line on the third day of Gettysburg.



Photos: © WIPL and Library of Congress, unless otherwise stated **Map:** Ian Bull

Right Ewell's attack on Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill on the evening of 2 July 1863. Lack of co-ordination plagued Confederate operations throughout the three-day battle. By the time Ewell's men got going, the main echelon attack to the west was fizzling out, allowing Union commanders to shift sufficient men to their right flank to shore up its defence.

On the north face were the remnants of Wadsworth's two Union 1st Corps brigades, reduced to barely regimental strength the previous day.

Attack at dusk

Two Confederate brigades ground to a halt, unable to get at the defenders in the confusion of dusk, treacherous terrain, and well-defended obstacles. The third, which partially outflanked Greene's line, advanced onto the left shoulder of the hill and found itself overlooking the logistically crucial Baltimore Pike. But, as darkness closed in and enemy reinforcements arrived from Wadsworth, it too stopped – though firing continued for hours.

At the top of the so-called 'fish hook', Cemetery Hill formed the cornerstone of the Union position. Ewell's orders to divisional commander General Early, a brave but difficult officer, were to attack up Cemetery Hill, supported on his right by Rodes' Division.

All day Early's command had been harassed by sniper fire, Hays' Louisiana brigade losing over 40 men to fire from positions far beyond the effective range of their Springfield rifles. In the past day, since Early had halted them, they had watched three defensive lines scraped into the hillside and powerful batteries established on top of the hill.

The bulk of the Union infantry had, however, been rushed back across the hill to reinforce Cemetery Ridge against the echelon attack. This left only the remains of 11th Corps, the so-called 'Flying Dutchmen', some 4,000 men, a third of them facing Early, the rest facing west. Visiting his powerful batteries earlier, Union artillery chief General Hunt had told the crews to fight to the last man, whatever 'the Dutchmen' did.

The sun approached the horizon, and sounds of the echelon attack beyond Cemetery Hill petered out. There was no sign of General Rodes' Division as Early rode slowly through his command, ignoring the sharpshooters' bullets buzzing round him. Finally, he gave the order to advance into the gathering gloom.

The battle for Cemetery Hill

The 1,100 men of the Louisiana brigade advanced on the right, with a smaller brigade, from North Carolina, barely 900 strong before the battle, to its left, and General Gordon's brigade, the strongest, behind as reserve. Even with the Union infantry thinned out to reinforce Cemetery Ridge – as Lee had planned – there were still far more Union infantry on the hill than attackers.

The defenders, moreover, were mostly concentrated at the highest of three lines, waiting behind a wall, alongside the formidable Union artillery. And the Confederates had half a mile of open ground to cross to reach them.

As they advanced, the guns on Culp's Hill added enfilade fire to the plunging ▷

GENERAL HUNT

Brigadier-General Henry Hunt (1819-1889) was Chief of Artillery in the Army of the Potomac for most of the American Civil War. Considered by his contemporaries the greatest artillery tactician of the war, he rewrote the manual on the organisation and use of artillery. His brilliance and courage played a pivotal role in many Civil War battles, including preventing the Union defeat at Fredericksburg from turning into a catastrophe. On the second and third days of Gettysburg, his sure touch was a major element in the Union victory.

Above Union men form line on Culp's Hill in preparation to receive a Confederate attack.

artillery fire from ahead, shredding Avery's Brigade. Union Colonel Harris recorded: 'They moved forward as steadily, amid this hail of shot, shell, and Minnie ball, as though they were on parade… We did not expect this assault so bravely and rapidly made. In fact, we did not expect any assault.'

While Avery's men marched, Hays skilfully manoeuvred his brigade through dead ground, doubling across exposed places to avoid Union fire most of the way.

The shrill Rebel yell went up and, wielding knives and bayonets, the Southerners burst over the wall, through the infantry and on, into the guns. As many infantry fled, the Union gunners defended their guns with ramrods and shovels. Pushing through them, some 400 Confederates, mostly from the Louisiana brigade, reached the top, the remaining survivors still fighting in the Union batteries below.

A moment in the balance

Stretching out before them in the smoky gloom was the, now quiet, line of Cemetery Ridge. For a few minutes, they held the key to it. Meanwhile Early, who had repeatedly opined that the attack was hopeless without support, kept Gordon's brigade straining at the leash at the bottom of the hill.

Hearing the fighting as the main assault ended, Hancock had sent one of his last two uncommitted Union brigades, just 750 men under Carroll, back from Cemetery Ridge. Simultaneously, General Schurz persuaded two reluctant 11th Corps regiments to follow him from the other side of the hill towards the Louisiana brigade.

Unsure who the approaching troops were in the dark, Hays did not open fire until the first line of Unions did so. The Louisiana Tigers fired back and charged with their bowie knives. Then, as fresh Union troops emerged from both sides, Hays reluctantly withdrew. Shortly afterwards, Rodes' Division finally arrived at the western edge of the hill – too late.

Night-time planning

A weary General Meade, who had ridden through the previous night, gathered his seven corps commanders together in a farmhouse later that evening. They decided to hold their ground. In response to Lee's long history of flanking attacks, Meade gave orders for most of his remaining stronger brigades to deploy to his flanks. He put two behind the battery now established on Little Round Top, and also heavily reinforced Culp's Hill.

Lee, who was ill and had had only two hours' sleep, was left by his tiny staff – exhausted by fulfilling the reconnaissance duties of the missing Stuart – to work virtually alone late into the night writing the plan to evacuate thousands of casualties and 6,000 prisoners. He summoned no council.

For the second day running, an extraordinary blunder by a subordinate had let a brilliant opportunity for victory slip. Yet, on both days, the Confederates had inflicted disproportionate casualties: a total of 20,000, plus a 3,000-strong cavalry division driven off the field, in return for around 12,000 or 13,000 received. Furthermore, a fresh infantry division under George Pickett, the newly rejoined – albeit exhausted – cavalry division under 'Jeb' Stuart, and the balance of Longstreet's artillery had all now reached the battlefield.

This had brought Lee up to almost equal numbers with his opponent, for the first time in the war. The capture that afternoon of the Peach Orchard salient also meant that for the first (and only) time, Lee's army had a chance of artillery superiority, despite its inferior ammunition, since the Union positions were overlooked by both the salient and by

Below Confederates advance to assault Union positions on Culp's Hill.

Seminary Ridge, where two infantry corps and most of Lee's guns were assembling.

The Union position

Unlike Greene's lone brigade, the main body of Union infantry had no picks or shovels and were strung out in a two-mile line on open rocky ground. One brigade had borrowed artillery shovels and scratched a one-foot-deep shell scrape behind the low wall which ran part of the way along the ridge. Others had piled up some fence rails – scant protection against the 163 Confederate guns overlooking them.

Union artillery commander General Hunt could deploy only 119 guns because of their 'restricted' position – enjoying superior ammunition, but firing uphill and with less-visible targets until the attack began.

Rising at 3am after two hours' sleep, Lee issued his orders. Ewell should pin down the strong Union forces on Meade's right flank with a diversion, while the Confederate artillery blasted first the Union guns and then their infantry in the centre of Cemetery Ridge, in a barrage unprecedented in the short history of his army. Longstreet would attack again, led by Pickett's fresh division, followed by Hill. Stuart would take his cavalry past Ewell and threaten the back of Cemetery Ridge.

Lee's plan

After the poor performance of most of his immediate subordinates in the previous two days, it seems strange that Lee did not get them together. Presumably his severe losses of senior officers led to him leaving his nominal chief of artillery, presidential favourite and unsackable incompetent General Pendleton, a free hand with the artillery disposition.

At around 4.30am, the sound of gunfire to the north indicated that fighting had already started. Word soon arrived that Union forces had put in a determined attack against Johnson's positions on Culp's Hill. Johnson, reinforced from Ewell's other two divisions, mounted a bloody and unsuccessful counter-attack. By the time Lee's message reached Ewell to tell him that the main attack of the day had been postponed, the Confederates had been driven back to Rock Creek with heavy losses.

At 4.45am Lee arrived at Longstreet's headquarters to find that Pickett's Division had not even been brought up, let alone deployed ready to assault, as ordered. Longstreet told Lee that an early reconnaissance had convinced him that an attack around Meade's left flank, at Little Round Top, had a much better chance of success than a frontal assault. In a later memoir he claims that he said: 'General, I have been a soldier all my life… and should know as well as anyone what soldiers can do. It is my opinion that no 15,000 men ever arrayed for battle can take that position.'

Misgivings

Depression was not confined to Confederate generals. Overnight, Union divisional commander Birney had told one of his brigade commanders that he wished the shell that had taken his horse had killed him too, so desperate was the outlook for the Union.

Lee overruled Longstreet, without further discussion. They were joined by General Hill, commander of 3rd Corps, also deployed this side of Gettysburg, and a clutch of staff officers. Lee's original vision had been a repeat of the previous day's echelon attack, but focused on a much narrower front, and led by Pickett's fresh division. Warned, however, that to use Longstreet's two worn-down divisions on the right would invite a flanking attack by enemy cavalry, Lee recognised the threat; his own cavalry, exhausted by their marathon ride, would be thrusting forward around Ewell's corps on the other side.

After a prolonged forward reconnaissance under sniper fire, Lee instead ordered Hill to provide Longstreet with six brigades to reinforce Pickett in the first wave. Hill did so, but he included several which had suffered grievous losses in the battle so far, while retaining four unscathed brigades.

Three more of Hill's brigades were placed under Longstreet's command as reserves for the second wave, including those of Wilcox and Lang. This left Hill effectively a divisional commander; Lee told him to use the four brigades he had retained – arguably his freshest and best – to 'afford General Longstreet further assistance, if required, and avail himself of any success that might be gained'.

> For God's sake come quick or my ammunition will not let me support you properly.
>
> ***Colonel Alexander, artillery chief, 1st Corps, Army of Northern Virginia***

GENERAL PICKETT

Major-General George Pickett (1825-1875) was frequently teased by his former comrades at West Point both for his abysmal academic performance there (he passed out bottom) and his eccentric appearance, wearing his black hair in long flowing ringlets. Nevertheless, he selected for his division the route to Cemetery Ridge with the best chance of success, and kept his grip throughout the desperate charge which bears his name.

Longstreet's deployment

The previous day Lee had watched Longstreet overcome severe misgivings before the attack and handle his corps brilliantly. So Lee left his one remaining reliable infantry corps commander in charge and returned to his forward headquarters.

In contrast to his usual careful dispositions, Longstreet made no effort to pre-position the six attached brigades: they were just ordered to rise from their existing lines on the signal and advance. Pickett had selected a start line so that his three fresh brigades (some 6,000 men) would advance for most of the ¾ mile route protected from many of the Union guns by dead ground, while Hill's six brigades to his north, worn down to around 7,000 men, would have to advance 1¼ miles under the full weight of Union fire and cross three walls.

Longstreet also ordered that all units would start simultaneously, so Pickett's men would later have to wait under fire for the rest to catch up.

Co-ordinating Longstreet's artillery was Alexander, who had performed so ▷

GENERAL LONGSTREET

Brave, bold, and tactically brilliant as a subordinate commander in defence and attack, James Longstreet was one of the strangest characters in the Civil War. Bitterly resentful of the success of others in independent command, he failed to shine on the rare opportunities it was given to him. After swallowing his disagreement on the second day at Gettysburg, he deployed his eight available brigades with consummate skill. His account of the battle, written a generation later, portrayed Lee's handling of the battle as inept and the final day's charge as a misconceived and hopeless venture. Most Confederates, including some of his subordinates, dismissed his portrayal as partial and inaccurate, but his text formed a principal source for the most successful Civil War novel of the post-WWII era, Michael Shaara's *The Killer Angels*. This helped to develop a widely held view of the battle today quite at odds with the views of most of the participants.

well the previous day. He attached nine short-range howitzers, with plenty of ammunition, to the back of Pickett's forces to provide close-range support as the infantry neared the enemy.

To his fury, he heard his counterparts in Hill's corps were wasting precious ammunition blazing away at Union skirmishers positioned in a farmhouse. His orders were, once the bombardment began, to range on specific pieces of the enemy artillery, but many of the weary Confederate gunners failed to do this and over-estimated the distance. Alexander gave the signal for the bombardment to begin just after 1pm.

Bombardment

Meade and his senior commanders were eating lunch as they discussed tactics in a house to the rear. Meade remarked that he had expected a frontal assault but now believed that Lee would revert to his usual approach and hit his left flank, where he had deployed his freshest troops. Hancock pronounced that the attack would be straight at the centre (manned by the remnants of his and Sickles' exhausted corps). Just then the bombardment started, and a shell cut an orderly in half.

At first, the Rebel shelling seemed devastating. Union commanders testified that it was the heaviest they had ever faced. All along Cemetery Ridge, weary Union units quivered as the shells hammered in.

Below Confederate infantry wait in the shelter of woodland for the artillery bombardment to end and the charge to begin.

> 'I expected to see General Lee's army marching up to take possession of the field, but I could see nothing but dead and wounded …'
>
> ***Captain Smith, 11th Virginia, Army of Northern Virginia***

Jeb Stuart's one accomplishment in his ride round the enemy was to sever every railway and telegraph line, so the Union guns were getting low on ammunition after two days' desperate fighting. Thus General Hunt had ordered that they were to remain silent until the Confederate infantry attacked.

Yet the Confederates' failure to range their fuses led to most of their shots passing over the Union defences. As rounds fell in the supply area, they were rewarded with devastating explosions of ammunition reserves and mushrooming smoke, seeming to negate the need for accurate calibration. Some Union gunners were killed and a number of guns destroyed, but the infantry in front lay almost unscathed.

Riding up and down the line, Hancock received a deep wound in the groin but got it strapped up and resumed. He ordered the Union artillery commanders to open fire, overriding Hunt. Some did so, causing significant but not devastating Confederate casualties. Colonel McGilvery, who commanded the southern end of the gun line, refused; his 41 guns remained stubbornly silent.

After around half an hour's bombardment, Alexander discovered that Pemberton had moved the ammunition reserve out of range of the Union guns, without telling anyone where it had gone. He sent a message to division commanders, Pickett and Pettigrew, 'For God's sake come quick… or my ammunition will not let me support you properly.'

Above A general view of Pickett's charge from the Union lines on the afternoon of 3 July.

Right Pickett's charge on the afternoon of 3 July 1863. Perhaps the greatest, and certainly the most famous, infantry attack in American history.

'Remember Old Virginia!'

When Alexander told Longstreet that Pemberton had also reallocated the howitzers stationed to follow the infantry, Longstreet ordered, 'Go and halt Pickett right where he is and replenish your ammunition.' Alexander replied 'Even if we had [the ammunition], it would take an hour or two… our only chance is to strike while the iron is hot.'

It was too late anyway. As Longstreet agonised, Pickett rode briskly along his line calling to the men to get up and advance, crying 'Remember Old Virginia!' His soldiers strode through the cheering Rebel gunners.

A quarter mile to their north, Hill's six brigades stepped off. Among them was the 14th Tennessee, who had mustered 960 men in 1861. The 365 men then serving had stormed McPherson's Ridge two days earlier. Now there were 60 left. These survivors rose, dressed ranks, and stepped off – as every remaining Union gun opposite on Cemetery Ridge opened on the six brigades.

Gaps appeared in their ranks as the ghastly 'whicker, whicker, whicker' filled the air, shells e xploded, and round-shot careered through the ranks, leaving a bloody trail. They closed ranks and surged onward.

To their south, Pickett's division ▷

Top Pickett's men under close-range musketry and canister fire as they approach the Union line. **Above** General Armistead, one of Pickett's three brigade commanders, leads his men into the Union line on Cemetery Ridge, waving his hat over his head on a sword. Seconds later he was shot down, mortally wounded.

advanced, initially only under accurate fire from the lone battery surmounting Little Round Top, which could see over the Peach Orchard. At the front were Kemper and Garnett's brigades, led by their mounted commanders. Armistead led his brigade close behind on foot. Remembering the Confederate advance, Union Colonel Hall remarked: 'The perfect order and steady but rapid advance of the enemy called forth praise from our troops but gave their line the appearance of being fearfully irresistible.'

Cannon fire

As the guns shredded men, the grey ranks closed up, and still they came on. Approaching the stepping-off point, British observer Colonel Fremantle commented: 'I came to a perfect stream of [walking wounded] in numbers as great as Oxford Street… some walking alone on two rifles, others supported by men less badly wounded… but in no case did I see a sound man helping… unless of the ambulance corps.'

Close behind his division, as they approached the final stretch, Pickett looked behind for signs of the following echelons. Seeing only the two small brigades of Wilcox and Lang following, he dispatched messengers back: to Wilcox asking him to close up, to Longstreet saying that the position would be taken but that he would not be able to hold it without reinforcements.

Pickett's two leading brigades rose out of the dead ground, beyond the cover of the Peach Orchard salient. Many of the Union guns opposite had fallen silent, left only with their deadly, but close-range, canister ammunition. But McGilvery's 41 guns, concealed from the Confederate artillery, opened up on Pickett's men a devastating fire – and from a half enfilade, as the Union line was oblique to Pickett's advancing troops. One cannon ball felled 13 men.

Musket fire

As Pickett's Division executed a left oblique turn under fire, a Vermont brigade swung in, their fire devastating Kemper's flank. He ordered two regiments to face right and return fire, as the division ploughed onward.

At 100 yards, Garnett's and Kemper's brigades halted, fired a volley and charged, led by their commanders. Two gaps appeared in the line opposite as Union regiments bolted. In the larger gap Lieutenant Cushing and the survivors of his battery remained firing. Garnett died with his horse and Kemper fell severely wounded as their men surged into the Union position.

In close support, Armistead halted his men in a fold in the ground to catch their breath and realign, as the brigades ahead charged, then pointed with his sword to the largest developing gap and shouted 'Give them cold steel!'

One of his officers recalled the brigade 'had nearly reached the stone fence, when there was such a rush of prisoners through our lines that I exclaimed, "The day is ours."'

Armistead was first over the wall, holding his hat aloft on his sword. The last two Union guns with surviving crews belched a final deadly discharge of canister. Armistead fell mortally

> General Pickett, your men have done all that men can do.
>
> ***General Lee, commander, Army of Northern Virginia***

wounded as his front rank was shredded. The Union guns fell silent as Cushing died, and the grey tide swept over them.

Point of impact

The Union brigade commander at the point of impact was General Webb. A number of his units, including the 70 survivors of the Irish 69th, stood doggedly at their posts, but others fled. Webb tried to persuade one regiment, firing in support 100 yards back, to come forward, but they refused. He dashed back to the mêlée.

Henry Hunt's horse had just been shot from under him, but he was at the point of impact, fighting with his pistol like a subaltern. He later recalled: 'for a time the whole fate of the battle hung trembling in the balance, for had our line been broken here his whole line would doubtless have been upon us… which would have made it almost impossible to resist him.'

As Colonel Freemantle reached Longstreet, Pickett's messenger, Captain Bright, arrived with a desperate appeal for help. Freemantle remarked that he would not have missed 'this magnificent charge… for the world.' Longstreet replied, 'I would… the charge is over.'

He sent off Captain Bright with the message: 'Tell [General Pickett] what you have heard me say…'. He called Bright back and added, 'Wilcox's brigade is in the Peach Orchard… he can order him to his assistance.'

Captain Smith of the 11th Virginia recalled: 'We thought our work was done … for the last enemy in sight we had seen disappear over the hill in front. I expected to see General Lee's army marching up to take possession of the field… As I looked [back]… I could see nothing but dead and wounded… It was a grievous disappointment.' Through the smoke, some glimpsed Wilcox and Lang behind, but they drifted off to the south.

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A bloody disaster

It was now hopeless. Meade was rushing in neighbouring units, while the other Confederate column, led by Pettigrew, had been wrecked, its dead and wounded in a long bloody smear, all the way from their stepping-off point to the last wall 200 yards short of the Yankee position. Grievously reduced in number, they had stopped and fired, then tried hopeless and bloody sallies against the Union position.

As the sheer weight of Union numbers asserted itself, and with no support in sight and most of their commanders down, the remnants of the Confederate attackers fell back, suffering more casualties on the way from McGilvery's guns. At last Wilcox and Lang advanced, too late, except to receive more casualties.

The attack had been a bloody disaster. Lee met the returning survivors, saying 'General Pickett, your men have done all that men can do.' Lee's demeanour showed none of the despair he must have felt, as he encouraged the dispirited soldiers to get in line for the expected counter-attack.

It never came, except that an unwise detachment of Union cavalry tried to attack Longstreet's flank. Most of them, including their commander, died. Meanwhile, Stuart's exhausted division had run into a strong Union cavalry force, which repulsed them with roughly equal casualties. In any case, it was too late.

Realising that his opportunity had gone, and almost out of ammunition, Lee held his ground for one more day then fell back during the night to Virginia, in good order, with 17 miles of carts behind. Meade was content to shadow him, rather than attack.

The final tally in losses had been roughly even, but the Union could afford its butcher's bill, while the Confederacy was scraping its manpower barrel.

The next day, Longstreet remarked to Freemantle that their mistake had been not employing twice as many men on Pickett's attack. When this got out it caused some puzzlement, as Lee had made available to Longstreet the whole of his own and Hill's corps, a further 15 brigades on top of the nine in the first wave.

As Pickett remarked: 'I was so sure of success! … I had been assured by Alexander that General Lee had ordered every brigade in his command to charge Cemetery Hill; so I had no fear of not being supported… But alas, no support came; and my poor fellows who had gotten in were overpowered.'

Its defeat was not to become certain until Lincoln secured a second term in the election more than a year later, but the high tide of the Confederacy was over, opening the way for Union victory, slave emancipation, and the reunification of the United States.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julian Brazier is a former SAS Reserves officer and management consultant. He is now Conservative MP for Canterbury.

Below The Confederate retreat from Gettysburg.

The spy who trailed . .
Clifton WEBB · Gloria GRAHAME
The Man Who Never Was
ROBERT FLEMYNG JOSEPHINE GRIFFIN · STEPHEN BOYD
CINEMASCOPE

Left The film's promotional poster showing Clifton Webb, Gloria Grahame, and Stephen Boyd.

THE MAN WHO NEVER WAS

Taylor Downing continues his series on great war movies by reviewing a vintage classic about a masterpiece of deception.

On 10 July 1943, 70 years ago, the invasion of Sicily was launched. Having finally thrown the Axis powers out of North Africa, it was the first Allied move against Hitler's 'Fortress Europe'. As final victory against Rommel's Afrika Korps became certain, one of the many challenges facing the Allies was how to disguise their intention to attack Sicily – the obvious next step once the Germans had been defeated in Tunisia.

The Allies were confident of victory against the weaker Italian forces, but were keen to minimise the numbers of battle-hardened German troops in Sicily by convincing them that an attack was coming elsewhere in southern Europe – in Greece or Sardinia, for example.

Operation Barclay was set up with plans to create the impression that an entire army group existed in the eastern Mediterranean. It was to create a lot of noise, as though planning to invade Greece. General Henry Wilson was put in charge of this imaginary army. Double agents were to feed disinformation to the Germans about landings in Greece. Meanwhile, General Patton was apparently put in charge of an operation to invade Sardinia and Corsica. As part of Barclay, two intelligence officials came together to mastermind a brilliant additional and original aspect to the deception plan.

Flight-Lieutenant Charles Cholmondeley was a lanky eccentric with a waxed moustache, and a member of the top-secret Twenty Committee consisting of representatives of the armed services, MI5, and MI6. He suggested the idea of depositing a dead body on the Spanish coast. With the body would be a briefcase containing elaborate plans that would deceive the enemy into thinking the Allies were about to land in Greece and Sardinia and to by-pass Sicily.

Planting a corpse

Real agents could be intercepted, interrogated, and tortured. A dead agent could not be. Lieutenant-Commander the Honourable Ewen Montagu of Naval Intelligence, a successful barrister and Kings Counsel before the war, was paired with Cholmondeley. They were charged with finding a dead body and constructing the details of the plan to deceive the Germans.

Cholmondeley and Montagu were an unlikely pair, but together they planned and carried out an extraordinary operation. First they had to find a corpse they could use. Then they gave the body the name of an invented Royal Marine officer, Major William Martin. Next they invented a personality and a background for Martin. Finally they had to create false letters and documents of sufficient credibility to fool German military intelligence, the *Abwehr*.

General Sir Archibald Nye, the deputy to the Chiefs-of-Staff Committee, was asked to write a personal letter to General Sir Harold Alexander, the commander of Allied forces in North Africa, revealing details of the false invasion plan. Admiral Louis Mountbatten, chief of Combined Operations, was also asked to write a personal letter to Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, again giving away key details.

The body was dropped off the Spanish coast at dawn on 30 April 1943 by HMS *Seraph*, a submarine that had already taken part in Special Operations and whose captain was considered entirely trustworthy. An RAF dinghy was dropped in the sea nearby to suggest that the body had come down in a plane crash. It was known the tides would carry the corpse ashore.

OPERATION HUSKY

Codenamed 'Operation Husky', the objective of the attack on Sicily was to seize key strategic targets, including airfields and ports, to ensure Allied control over the Mediterranean. It was also hoped that by striking against Mussolini's Italy, the invasion might knock the battle-weary Italians out of the war altogether, dealing a fatal blow to the Axis alliance.

Politically, it marked the success of Churchill and the British Chiefs-of-Staff's plan to invade the south of Europe rather than follow the American preference for an early cross-Channel invasion of northern France. Militarily, the invasion was the largest amphibious operation of the war to date, involving a vast force of 2,500 ships and 160,000 men, spearheaded by an airborne assault force of elite British and American paratroopers.

Taking the bait?

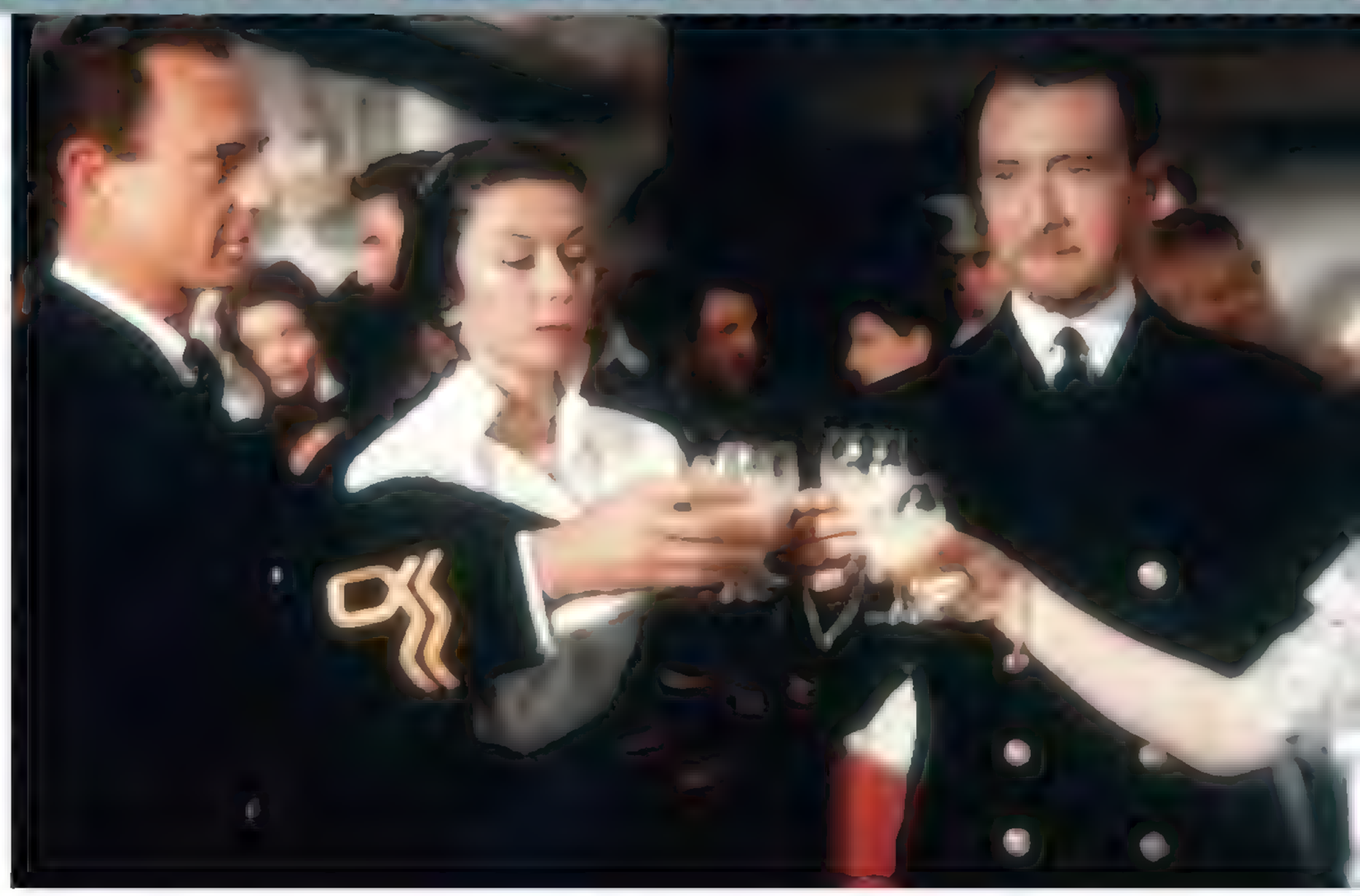
Cholmondeley and Montagu picked the Andalucian coast of Spain near the town of Huelva because they knew a particularly energetic German agent named Adolph Clauss was operating there. They hoped he would convince the Spanish authorities to hand over the briefcase the dead man was carrying.

The plan, known as 'Operation Mincemeat', was full of risks. Would the Spanish realise the body had not died by drowning but had died of other causes some time before? Would they hand over the documents to the Germans? If they did, would the Germans take the bait and think the documents were authentic?

There were severe doubts about the viability of Mincemeat, but Churchill himself, who loved these sort of cloak-and-dagger operations, gave his personal approval and the operation was on.

The deception was a complete success. But only after various unforeseen developments had nearly knocked the whole plan off course. The documents taken from the body were not seen by the German agent in Huelva but were eventually taken to Madrid. There, before being returned to British diplomats, they were handed over to the German authorities in the Spanish capital, who were given one hour to photograph them.

The documents were passed on to Berlin, where they were assessed by Intelligence Chief Lieutenant Colonel Baron von Roenne. Although he might have had his doubts, he passed them on as genuine. When they finally reached his desk, Hitler was completely taken in by them.



Duping Hitler

Two Panzer divisions were removed from the Eastern Front and one from France. All three divisions were sent to Greece. New minefields were laid off the Greek coast. Squadrons of R-boats were sent from Sicily, and, most importantly, Field-Marshal Rommel was put in charge of German forces in Greece.

British intelligence picked up details of all this by listening in to German Enigma messages, and knew the deception had been a success. When the invasion did come in Sicily, for two weeks Hitler was convinced it was a cover and failed to reinforce the island. The battle for Sicily lasted a mere 39 days. Its capture led to the fall of Mussolini and the loss of Hitler's Italian ally. Mincemeat, as it was reported in a secret telegram directly to Churchill, had been 'swallowed rod, line, and sinker'.

From book to film

The publication of Ewen Montagu's book *The Man Who Never Was* proved ▷

Above Robert Flemyng, Gloria Grahame, and Clifton Webb in *The Man Who Never Was*.

Left During the Allied invasion of Sicily, the SS *Robert Rowan* (Liberty ship K-40) explodes after being hit by a German Ju 88 bomber off of Gela, Sicily, on 11 July 1943.

MONTAGU'S BOOK

The story of Operation Mincemeat might well have remained secret for decades. Ewen Montagu was keen to write up the story, but MI5 vetoed it as they believed it would harm Anglo-Spanish relations. But five years after the war, Alfred Duff Cooper wrote a novel, *Operation Heartbreak*, featuring a plot in which a dead body with false documents was planted on the Spanish coast. This generated some frenzied rumours in the press, and the security services reluctantly decided it was best to reveal the story of Mincemeat.

Ewen Montagu took a short break from his busy legal career and wrote *The Man Who Never Was*, which was published in 1951. Several conditions were placed on Montagu in writing up the story. He was not to reveal the name of the body and how it was obtained. Nor was he to reveal how the Ultra transcripts were used – the secret of the cracking of the Enigma codes was not revealed for another 20 years.

Most significantly, Charles Cholmondeley, who had stayed in MI5 after the war, wanted nothing to do with the book and so was written out of the narrative by Montagu, who placed himself at the centre of the deception plan.

The book became an instant best-seller and has sold three million copies over the last 60 years.

a sensation both in Britain and in the United States. Montagu went on a lecture tour in the US and appeared on American television. It was not long before Hollywood came knocking at his door.

At an auction, 20th Century Fox bought the film rights to his book. The result was a lavish Anglo-American co-production shot in one of cinema's newest widescreen technologies, known as Cinemascope.

The film was made in Britain, but an American actor Clifton Webb played the central character of Ewen Montagu, the naval intelligence officer. Most of the other actors were British. Nigel Balchin, the acclaimed author and scriptwriter, adapted the book for the screen, and Ronald Neame directed.

Neame began his career as a clapper boy in 1929, and had gone on to become a hugely successful cinematographer, shooting films like *In Which We Serve* (1942) and *Brief Encounter* (1945) for David Lean. He also produced Lean's two famous Dickens adaptations, *Great Expectations* (1946) and *Oliver Twist* (1948).

He had directed a few films before *The Man Who Never Was*, but appointing him director ensured that the film would have both a dramatic and a convincing look, with scenes ranging from the streets of wartime London to the Spanish fishing port of Huelva (where filming actually took place), and from the cramped basement headquarters of naval intelligence to the interior of submarine HMS *Seraph*.

Still secret

The film reflected the book and told the story very much in line with the wishes of British intelligence in the mid-1950s. In the real events of 1943, British diplomats in Madrid had deceived the Spanish by pretending that the briefcase carried on the body of the dead officer was so important that they must have it back at all costs. This, of course, convinced the Spanish and the Germans that it contained something important. In 1955, the British did not want to reveal this deception, so none of this appears in the film. Also, the whole subject of Spanish collaboration with the Nazis was discreetly glossed over.

More significantly, Montagu was told that he must not reveal how the body had been obtained. The corpse had been supplied by the coroner of St Pancras in London, Bentley Purchase. It had been the body of an impoverished and illiterate Welshman who had committed suicide. He had no known family. However, stealing corpses for secret military operations was not something that anyone wanted to reveal ten years after the war.

So Montagu himself invented an elaborate deception in the book, in which he claimed to have met with the man's parents, who had agreed that the body could be used as long as his name would never be released. Montagu said that since he had agreed to the family's terms, he could never reveal the name of the person whose body played the central role in Operation Mincemeat.

Above Geoffrey Keen at the head of the table as Lieutenant-General Sir Archibald Edward Nye.

The body in the morgue

The film gives this story a further twist by inventing a scene in which Montagu meets the man's father (movingly played by Moultrie Kelsall) in the morgue. He agrees to his son's body being used as long as it is treated with respect and that its identity will never be revealed.

Below Gloria Grahame, bringing Hollywood passion to the role of Lucy Sherwood.

THE MAN WHO NEVER WAS

A Cinemascope Production for Sumar Film Productions, based on the book by Ewen Montagu, with a screenplay by Nigel Balchin. Produced by André Hakim and directed by Ronald Neame. Featuring Clifton Webb as Ewen Montagu, Robert Flemyng as Lieutenant George Acres, Laurence Naismith as Admiral Cross, Geoffrey Keen as General Nye, Gloria Grahame as Lucy Sherwood, and Stephen Boyd as Patrick O'Reilly. The DVD is distributed by the Odeon Entertainment Group.

Above Irish agent Patrick O'Reilly, played with a great combination of sinister menace and good humour by Stephen Boyd.

Balchin invents a final line of dialogue to put everyone off the trail: Montagu says to the father that he can be assured his son's body will be 'playing for England'. The father replies dourly 'My son's a Scotsman – you English always say England when you mean Britain!'

The film invents a new aspect of the story that provides much of the tension in the second half of the thriller. An Irish agent, working for the *Abwehr*, is sent to London to investigate the personal background of William Martin from the details that had been carefully placed on the corpse.

Cholmondeley and Montagu had gone to great lengths to create a convincing portrait of Martin's personal affairs. They had put in his pockets a letter from his bank manager warning him about his overspending; a receipt for new shirts from his tailors, Gieves of Savile Row; an invoice from his club for the last night he spent in London; and, most importantly, a love letter from the girlfriend who had just become his fiancée.

The invented Irish agent, named Patrick O'Reilly, played with a great combination of sinister menace and good humour by the Irish actor Stephen Boyd, investigates each of these cover stories one by one. He cannot decide whether William Martin is real or not. So he pays a visit to the fiancée who had written the love letter.

In reality, this had been written by Montagu's female clerk. In the film it was written by her flatmate, Lucy Sherwood, who was having an affair with an RAF flier. On the day that Lucy is told her boyfriend had been shot down, she gets home to find O'Reilly waiting for her. Barely knowing what she is saying, Lucy sobs that the man to whom she is engaged is dead. Lucy is played with un-British passion by the American actress Gloria Grahame.

O'Reilly is still uncertain about whether Martin is real or not, and the film heads to its dramatic climax. Montagu was happy with this entirely invented aspect of the story because, although it did not take place, he claimed 'it might well have happened'.

THE CORPSE

Cholmondeley and Montagu had great difficulty finding a corpse. It had to be of the right military age and to have died of causes that would not be identifiable after floating in the sea for a day or so. Eventually, an old friend of Montagu's, the coroner of St Pancras in London, Bentley Purchase, volunteered the corpse of a poor Welshman named Glyndwr Michael.

Friendless, without work, and probably mentally unstable, he had committed suicide by taking rat poison. The poison would have been difficult to detect in the body after being deposited in the sea for a while, so Michael's cadaver seemed ideal for the secret mission.

Cholmondeley and Montagu made enquiries and discovered that the poor man's parents were dead, and that his siblings and half-siblings still lived in the Welsh valleys and seemed to have lost all contact with Glyndwr. The coroner accordingly declared that he was a 'labourer of no fixed abode' and of 'unsound mind', and was to be buried abroad. This was, of course, a complete lie; had it had come out at the time, it could have discredited the entire coroners' system.

The body was packed in dry ice to prevent it from decomposing, placed in a canister, and handed over to Cholmondeley and Montagu. Because Montagu said he would never reveal the name of the man whose body they used, it was only in recent years that the sad story of Glyndwr Michael has been linked to Operation Mincemeat. The Spanish buried the body that was washed up on their shores in May 1943, and named it as William Martin. In 1997, Glyndwr Michael's name was added to the gravestone.

The full story

The full story behind *The Man Who Never Was* has only come to the surface in recent years. Ben Macintyre's book *Operation Mincemeat* became a best-seller (Bloomsbury, 2010), and in the same year Denis Smyth's more academic telling of the story appeared as *Deathly Deception* (Oxford University Press, 2010). Both books draw on largely the same sources – newly released documents at the National Archives and Montagu's personal papers.

Macintyre's book is brilliant on the extraordinary personalities involved, and the twists and turns as the deception plan unfolds. Smyth's book delves more into the framework of the intelligence organisations on either side of the story. Both books reveal how close the entire operation came to failing.

But it did not fail. And *The Man Who Never Was* is one of the finest wartime movie thrillers. Although it differs from what we now know to have been the full story of Operation Mincemeat, as long as we understand this and acknowledge the context in which the film was made, we can enjoy it for what it is: a great film about one of the most extraordinary deception plans of the Second World War.

GRAND STRATEGY 1943

The Bomber Offensive

1943 was a critical year for British grand strategy. The Battle of the Atlantic was almost lost. The opening of a Second Front was postponed. Yet up to a third of the British war effort was dedicated to bomber production. *MHM* Editor Neil Faulkner begins a three-part study of British grand strategy in 1943 with an analysis of the RAF's controversial strategic bombing campaign.

What is the real significance of the Dambusters legend? James Holland and I clashed on this question on the BBC radio air-waves on 17 May this year, the 70th anniversary of Operation Chastise, the famous bouncing-bomb raid on the Möhne, Eder, and Sorpe dams.

We both agreed about the ingenuity of Barnes Wallis, the skill and courage of Guy Gibson and 617 Squadron, and the extraordinary success of the operation. We perhaps differed a little in the attention we gave to the cost – 40% of the aircrew failed to return, and some 1,300 civilians were killed in the flooding, almost half of them foreign slave-labourers. But this was not the main point of disagreement.

The Dambusters have become a legend, and historians are duty-bound to unpick legends, for they are invariably cultural constructs with hidden purpose.

The purpose can be a noble one. Military legends are sometimes deployed to inspire effort in defence of a good cause. Equally often, they are deployed in the service of a bad one. Legends must be evaluated in relation to the wider cause they serve.

The Dambusters Raid was atypical. It was a precision attack on key installations by hand-picked, highly trained aircrew using a specially designed weapon. The Bomber Command norm was the precise opposite: area bombing of enemy cities on a mass scale using crude air-dropped munitions. The legend is the gloss on a mad, murderous reality.

Memorials

RAF Bomber Command absorbed up to a third of British military resources. The rate of aircraft production was four or five times that of tank production (the Russians produced approximately equal numbers of each). Bomber Command's 56,000 wartime casualties represented one-seventh of all British deaths in action by land, air, and sea during the Second World War.

A key question arises: did this represent economy of force, or would scarce resources have been better deployed in other ways?

The issue has been given added piquancy by the recent rehabilitation of Bomber Command implicit in official commemoration. At the end of the war, Air Chief-Marshal Arthur 'Bomber' Harris, the head of Bomber Command from February 1942 onwards, was snubbed in the distribution of honours and left embittered by the fact that his men were denied a campaign medal.

Only in 1992 was a statue to Bomber Harris erected. Paid for by an RAF veterans' organisation, it stands outside the RAF Church of St Clement Danes in London. When it was unveiled by the Queen Mother, she was jeered by protestors, one of whom shouted 'Harris was a war criminal'. The statue had to be guarded for a while because it became a target of iconoclasts.

Hardly less controversial has been the Bomber Command memorial unveiled in London's Green Park in 2012. This is dedicated to the aircrew who lost their lives, but some see it as a monument to the destruction of some 600 German cities and the killing of up to 600,000 German civilians in the strategic bombing offensive.

The men of Bomber Command

One thing should be clear. Bomber Command aircrew who lost their lives were victims of war as deserving of remembrance and respect as any others. They did what they were ordered to do and they paid a terrible price. The casualty rate was astronomical.

The Bomber Command norm was area bombing of enemy cities on a mass scale using crude air-dropped munitions.

A standard tour was 30 operations. But standard losses on a raid were one aircraft in 20. So the odds were that you would not survive a tour. At the height of the Bomber Offensive, in the middle of 1944, Harris lost half his entire aircrew in just three months. Overall, of the men who flew Bomber Command operations during the Second World War, two out of three were killed.

Little wonder the stench of human fear filled the cockpits when ground-crew cleaned up after a raid. 'People were dead scared all the time,' recalled one veteran. 'You became a hero just because you stood it.'

The aerial attrition was unlike anything experienced in other Second World War operations. It was comparable with that suffered by British soldiers on the Somme and at Passchendaele during the First World War.

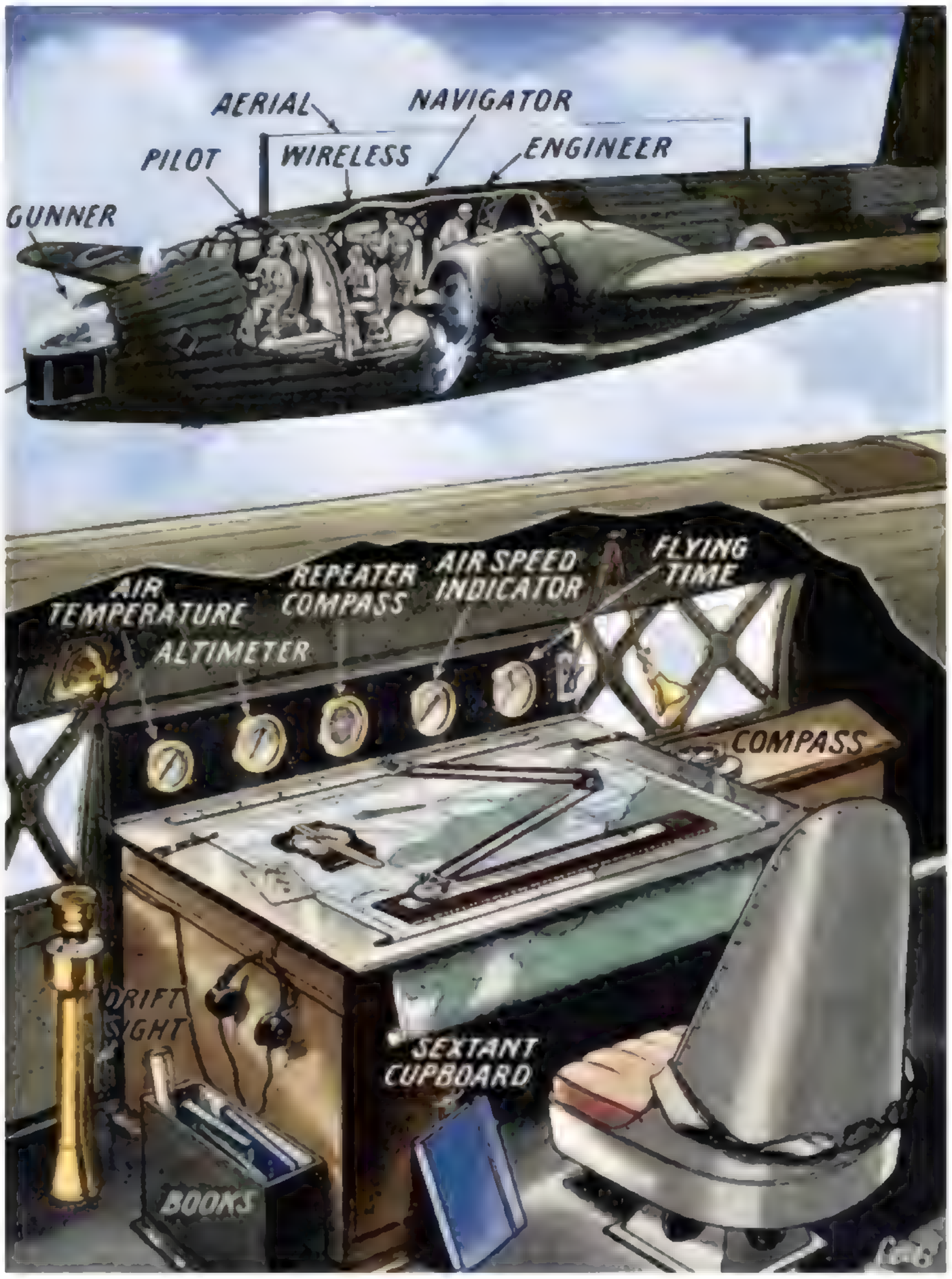
Economy of force?

But whether the Bomber Offensive was (a) militarily effective and (b) morally ▷

Photos: © WIPL

Left A formation of Wellington heavy bombers.

Right The Dambusters became a legend. But legends are cultural constructs. They tend to shift attention away from a wider, less heroic, more morally murky reality.



Above Left A gunner in the turrent of a bomber.
Above Cutaway shoing the crew of a Wellington heavy bomber and the navigator's work station inside the fuselage.
Above Right A crew of a Sterling Bomber watch their aircraft being loaded.

defensible are completely separate questions. And it is the job of the historian to ask such questions.

Some defend the strategic bombing offensive on the basis that the Second World War was a total war in which the deliberate destruction of German infrastructure, industry, and manpower was necessary to defeat the Nazi regime. No-one celebrates the destruction of cities or the mass killing of civilians. But some do argue that there was no alternative.

I think this argument is false, and for three reasons. First, the resources dedicated to the Bomber Offensive would have been better dedicated to other ways of war – that is, the strategic bombing campaign represented a failure to apply the military principle of economy of force.

It was the massive losses suffered in the fighting on the Eastern Front between late 1941 and mid 1944 that broke the power of the *Wehrmacht*.

Second, despite its massive claim on resources, Bomber Command's preferred strategy of area bombing failed either to cripple the German war economy or to break German civilian morale.

Third, area bombing turned German civilians (mainly the working-class communities of industrial cities that had never supported the Nazis) into targets and enemies, making it less likely (not, as Harris maintained, more likely) that they would turn on the regime in the way that ordinary Germans had done at the end of the First World War.

Clausewitz and the strategic bomber

The most effective way to win a modern industrialised war is to engage in a battle of attrition with the armed forces of the enemy and to grind them down until they are no longer capable of effective resistance. The truth of this simple Clausewitzian dictum has been proved in practice again and again.

The implication is not that battles must take a form like Passchendaele, Stalingrad, or Normandy: they need not be head-to-head pitched battles between conventional armies. An 'asymmetrical' guerrilla insurgency – a way of war that deliberately avoids protracted combat and the attendant risk of heavy casualties – might be equally effective in grinding down a conventional army. What matters is that it is the armed forces of the enemy that are the primary object of military action.

Using military power to destroy German aircraft, tanks, and artillery

Above Air Chief-Marshal Sir Arthur Travers Harris (1892-1984), Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, RAF Bomber Command, 1942-1945. This wartime propaganda image belies the grim, ruthless, narrow-minded architect of aerial devastation.

on the battlefield would have been a far more targeted – and therefore effective – way of destroying German military capacity than area bombing of industrial cities. The Russians proved this. It was the massive losses suffered in the fighting on the Eastern Front between late 1941 and mid 1944 that broke the power of the *Wehrmacht*.

Lies, damned lies, and Bomber Command statistics

Harris and his staff at Bomber Command's High Wycombe HQ pored over air-reconnaissance photos of bombed cities. Inflated statistical claims for damage and destruction streamed forth. In Max Hastings' words: 'Seldom in the history of warfare have attempts been made to measure victory or defeat by such remarkable mathematical yardsticks as those conceived in the huts and bunkers under the beech trees at High Wycombe… Harris and his staff were guilty of the same error as those earlier generals in Flanders who were so awed by the magnificence of their own barrages…'.

Bomber Command statisticians conjured a mathematical relationship between the areas of devastation visible on photos and loss of German war production. In February 1944 it was being claimed that a million man-years of production had been lost, representing an average return of 20,500 man-hours lost for every ton of bombs dropped. It followed, according to Harris's statistical witch-doctors, that 'a Lancaster has only to go to a German city once to wipe off its own capital cost, and the results of all subsequent sorties will be clear profit…'.

In fact, these assessments represented a spectacular failure of military intelligence (perhaps in both senses). The index of German arms production rose from 100 in January 1942 to 153 in mid 1942, 229 in mid 1943, and 332 in mid 1944. German Armaments Minister Albert Speer remarked: 'The total damage suffered by the armament programme as a result of air attack during the year 1943 was not considerable.'

The politics of airpower

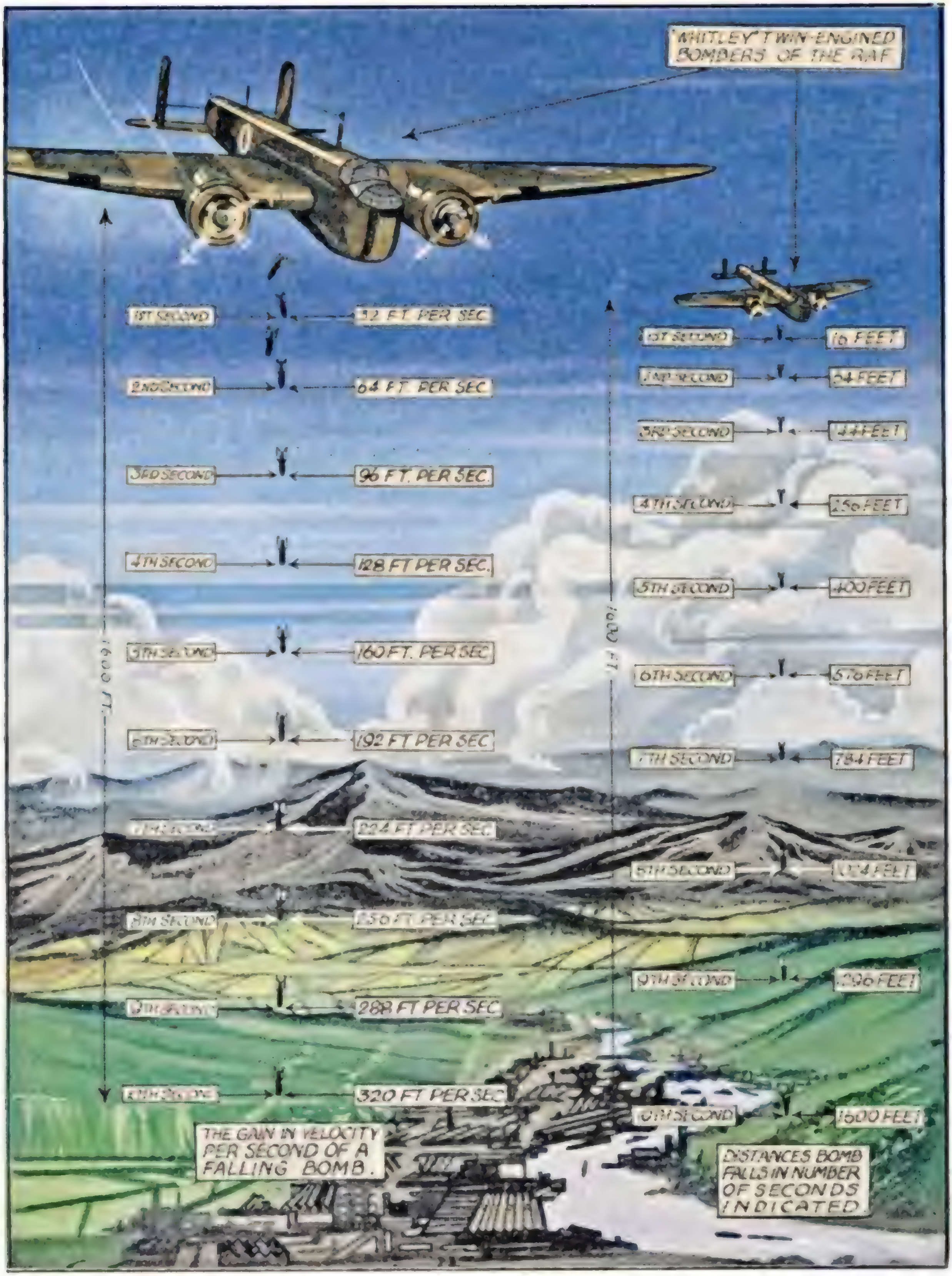
The fixation with strategic bombing was political. Again, Clausewitz is our guide, with his insistence on the relationship between society, policy, and war.

The interwar period was the great age of airpower prophets. These were leading airmen like the Italian Giulio Douhet, author of *The Command of the Air*; Hugh Trenchard, the first commander of the RAF; and Billy Mitchell, the father of the US air force, who proclaimed the supremacy of the new arm in future warfare. Here is Trenchard:

'It is not… necessary for an air force, in order to defeat an enemy nation, to defeat its armed forces first. Airpower can dispense with that intermediate step, can pass over enemy navies and armies, and penetrate the air defences and attack direct the centres of production, transportation, and communication from which the enemy war effort is maintained…'.

It was the brash confidence, the bragging certainty, of a johnny-come-lately military vested interest: if the airmen could win a future war on their own, why, surely they should have first claim over army and navy on the nation's resources? ▷

BOMBER COMMAND



Left A contemporary diagram explains some of the technicalities of aerial bombing to the wartime public. The strategic bombing campaign had a propaganda purpose for Churchill and other political leaders: for four years it was the only way of striking directly at Germany.

What of the politico-military top brass? What of Churchill, the leader of an embattled island-nation fighting on alone against a Nazi empire straddling Europe? He could ill-afford boggle-eyed hype about the potential of the bomber when resources were so scarce and the dangers mortal.

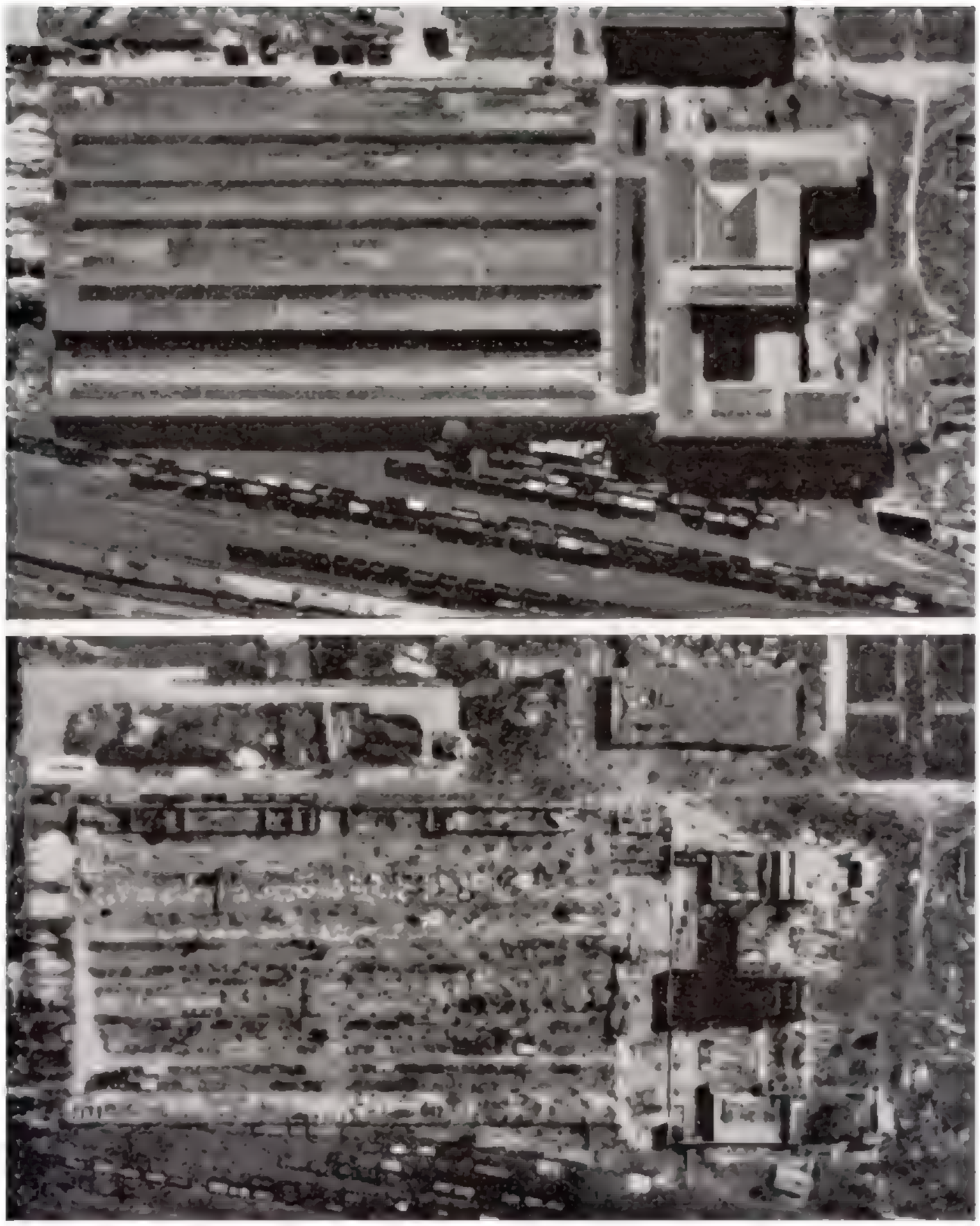
The evidence is that Churchill was never wholly convinced, but that he had priorities of his own that bound him in a close embrace with the deranged leadership of Bomber Command. After the defeat of France, Britain was under direct attack, yet seemed to lack effective means of hitting back. The Churchill government, moreover, was new and insecure – it was that of a bellicose maverick foisted on the nation in a dark hour of defeat and foreboding. The politics of the moment demanded military retaliation, and the bombers offered Churchill a way to strike at Germany itself.

Area bombing

That the bomber could win the war singlehanded was a constant refrain. 'I am certain,' wrote Harris to Charles Portal, the Chief of the Air Staff, in August 1943, 'that given average weather and concentration on the main job, we can push Germany over by bombing this year…'.

Then to Churchill, in November the same year: 'We can wreck Berlin from end to end if the USAAF [United States of America Air Force] will come in on it. It will cost between 400 and 500 aircraft. It will cost Germany the war.'

What did change, despite the consistent rhetoric, was the focus of aerial attack. Pre-war claims about the accuracy with which bombers could strike targets evaporated in the darkness of the night once operations were under way. Many bomber crews missed the city they were looking for, never mind specific industrial installations within it. Rival teams of scientists were soon engaged in a techno-war that continued until 1945, on one side devising navigational aids, target markers, and bomb sights to increase accuracy, on the other developing the jammers, decoys, and air-defence systems to protect key targets.



Eventually, as German airpower degraded towards the end of the war, the balance of advantage shifted to the Allies, and precision bombing of ball-bearings factories, synthetic oil plants, and electric power stations showed real promise.

Harris remained obdurate, however. From his High Wycombe bunker he railed against those who would divert him from area bombing. '…in the past 18 months,' he wrote to Portal, 'Bomber Command has virtually destroyed 45 out of the leading 60 German cities. In spite of invasion diversions [*sic*] we have so far managed to keep up and even to exceed our average of two and a half cities devastated a month… There are not many industrial centres of population left intact. Are we going to abandon this vast task… just as it nears completion?'

The ugly truth is that the German working class had long been Harris's primary target. His conviction was that 'it is the population which is the joint in the German armour'. The 40,000 burnt to death in Hamburg in July 1943, the similar number or more consumed in the destruction of Dresden in February 1945, the total of around two-thirds of a million German civilians in all who were killed in the strategic bombing campaign, these were not 'collateral damage'; they were the targets. Area bombing could have no other: Bomber Command could hit a city, but it could not hit specific targets within a city, and that meant that mainly what it hit was people's homes.

Above Before and after air-photos of a raid on Deutz, Cologne, May 1942. Harris's intelligence staff at his High Wycombe HQ pored over such images and issued a stream of exaggerated reports of collapsing German industrial capacity.

Air supremacy

None of the arguments holds up in the bright light of post-war analysis. Nor did they at the time. But the few who spoke out during the war met with a cold reception, and most soon lapsed into silence.

Only towards the very end of the war did collapsing German production lead to serious shortages of fuel, ▷

Above Victims of Bomber Command. Some of the estimated 40,000 German civilians who died in the Hamburg firestorm of July 1943.

Right A USAAF air-photo of bomb-damaged Hanover in October 1943.

munitions, replacement hardware, and spare parts. But by then the war was being won anyway, and the degradation of German military power on the battlefield was on a far greater scale than that inflicted by the bombers. Indeed, the RAF and USAAF bomber fleets, larger than ever before, and increasingly unimpeded as the Allies established more or less complete air supremacy, were running out of targets.

Why was Dresden attacked so late in the war, in such force, and with such terrible effect? Perhaps simply because the warlords of the air felt impelled to use their thousands of bombers somewhere. Why else did they exist?

What made Dresden possible was that virtually all of the German air defence had been destroyed, with anti-aircraft batteries overrun and home-defence fighters shot down – often by the swarms of Mustangs that now covered Allied bombing raids. Bomber Command losses plummeted in the last year of the war – as a direct consequence, of course, of the advance of the Russian and Anglo-American armies on the ground and the destruction of German military capacity in attritional warfare.

Balance sheet

Airpower is best used in tactical support of operations on land and sea, not as a strategic force in its own right. The single most sustained attempt to win a major war by airpower alone was the RAF Bomber Offensive of 1940-1945. It was a comprehensive failure.

German war production held up until the end of the war. When it collapsed, this had more to do with loss of German territory than with the effects of aerial bombing. And even at the end, the degradation of German military power was greater on the battlefield than through air-raids. At the same time, the diversion of Allied airpower into strategic bombing was at the expensive of tactical air support for land and sea operations.

There is no credible evidence that the diversion of German military resources into air-defence justified the Allied expenditure on bombers. The evidence is to the contrary: that the cost to the German war economy of the searchlights, AA guns, and home-defence fighters necessary to defend the homeland against air-raids was far less than the corresponding Allied expenditure on strategic bombers.

German morale did not crack. On the contrary, the bombing seems to have fostered a sense of national solidarity, even at times defiance, or at least grim determination; and the main beneficiary was, of course, the Nazi regime.

Ian Kershaw has analysed the extraordinary resilience of the dying regime in the last year of the war in his recent study *The End: Hitler's Germany, 1944-45*. The SS terror was a key component of this resilience: most Germans knew the end was coming, desperately wanted to survive, and preferred to keep their heads down until the Allied armies arrived. In the East, on the other hand, such was the storm of murder, rape, and robbery unleashed as the Red Army broke into German territory that a despairing resistance continued, in the hope, perhaps, that the Russians could be held up until the Americans arrived or the war ended.

What is clear is that the bombing was largely irrelevant. When you attack an entire nation, you drive people together. When you bomb civilians, you foster anger and demands for retaliation. You cannot bomb people into revolution. This was perhaps the most absurd of all the wild claims made by the prophets and practitioners of strategic bombing in the first half of the 20th century.

Further information

The two best books on the Bomber Offensive are Noble Frankland's *The Bombing Offensive against Germany* (1965) and Max Hastings' *Bomber Command* (1979). The two best Bomber Command memoirs are probably Leonard Cheshire's *Bomber Pilot* (1943) and Guy Gibson's *Enemy Coast Ahead* (1946). Giulio Douhet's *The Command of the Air* (1921) is the bible of interwar strategic-bombing doctrine.

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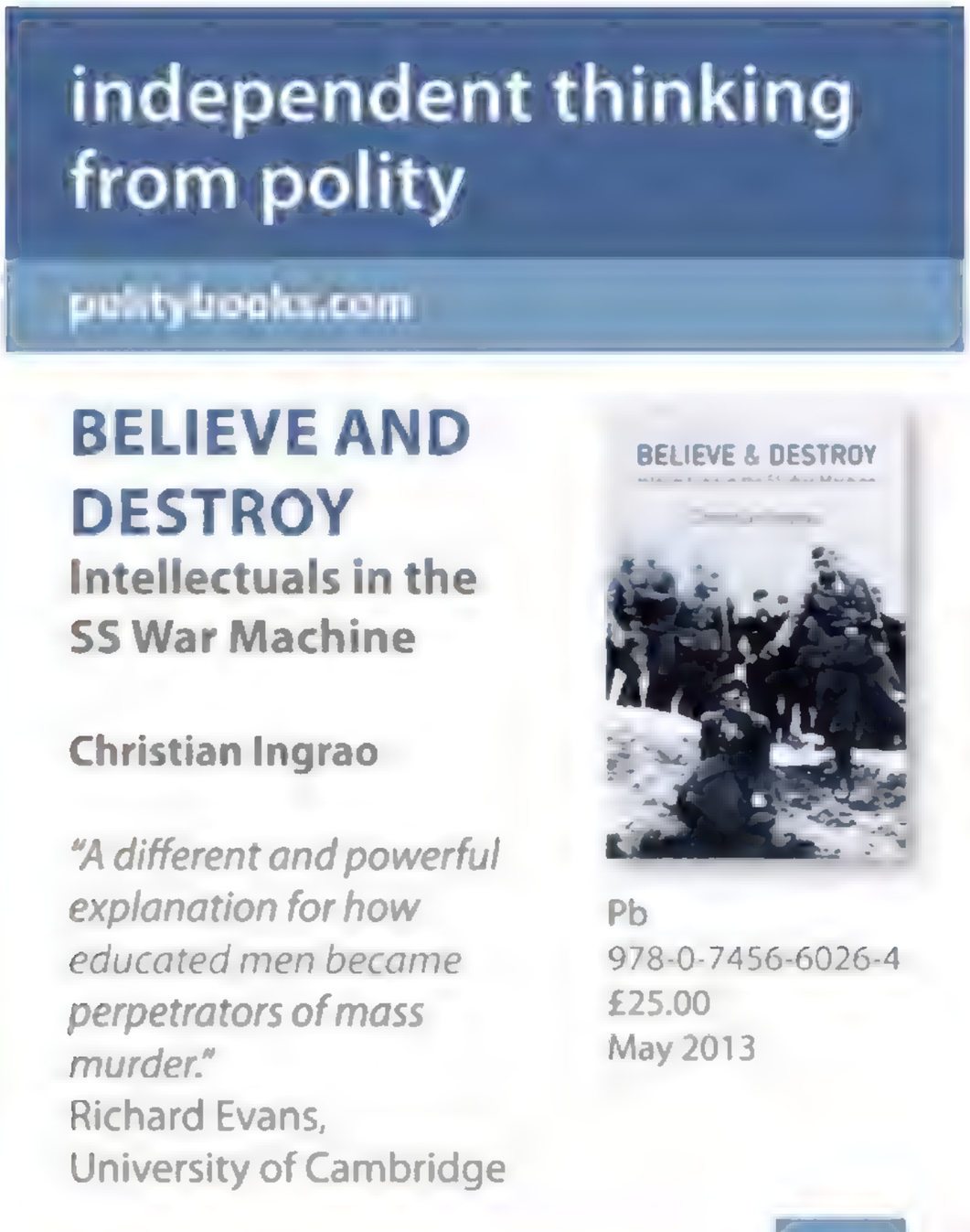
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BLESMA

MHM's homage to Britain's war charities and the people they support.

The British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association (BLESMA) has existed since after the First World War, starting out as networks of those who had lost limbs in service of their country. These networks evolved to become the national charity BLESMA – The Limbless Veterans, in 1932.

Above Blesma members from the Atlantic Challenge in 2005.

BLESMA has a legacy of helping wounded service personnel who have lost limbs or the use of limbs or eyes to rebuild their lives by providing them with rehabilitation and welfare support.

There is life after amputation

The charity's unique and pioneering rehabilitation programme, based on challenging sporting activities for amputees, is where BLESMA makes an immediate impact. If you thought that losing a leg or two would stop you skiing, think again!

The physical achievements of taking part in the rehabilitation programme rebuilds confidence; experiencing that you can still do amazing things rebuilds lives. Sharing this experience with other amputees, while being mentored by an experienced BLESMA member, helps injured servicemen and -women tackle challenges head on and with pride.

Mark's story

Royal Marine Mark Ormrod was 24 years old and just four months into a tour of duty in Afghanistan when he stepped on a landmine. As he recalls:

'There was a huge explosion. I didn't know what had happened. I thought we had come under attack. I knew in my head that I wasn't moving like I should have been. Then as the sand and the dust settled, I looked down and I realised what had happened.'

Mark had lost both of his legs above the knee, and was rushed to a field hospital where doctors had to amputate his right arm too. One of the charity's team visited Mark in hospital back in Britain, and was able to tell him about some of the amazing things other BLESMA amputees were doing. It was to be the start of a journey that would show him that he wasn't alone, that there were other guys out there like him, who were not just getting on with their lives, but doing remarkable things.

Mark's first goal was to master the use of prosthetic legs so he could receive his campaign medal standing up. He achieved this goal with only five months of rehab. Within a year of sustaining his injuries, he was sit-skiing in Colorado on one of BLESMA's rehabilitation activity breaks, run by experienced military amputees and designed to rebuild confidence and self-belief.

'Skiing with BLESMA was awesome. It was great to get out of the hospital environment with a group of people in the same circumstances, to push myself to the limits again and party a little bit. It made me feel normal again.'

BLESMA for life

BLESMA supports its members for life – from veterans of the Second World War to the conflict in Afghanistan, and all others in between. The charity supports all military personnel who have been injured during their time of service, whether it was while on duty or a road-traffic accident.

Rehabilitation, support, counselling, and care are the four principal foundations of the charity. By working together, BLESMA can help men and women of the Armed Forces and their families face the challenges ahead with renewed confidence and self-belief.

Further information

For more information on how you can support this charity, visit ***www.blesma.org*** or call **020 8590 1124**.

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THE EAGLE HAS FALLEN

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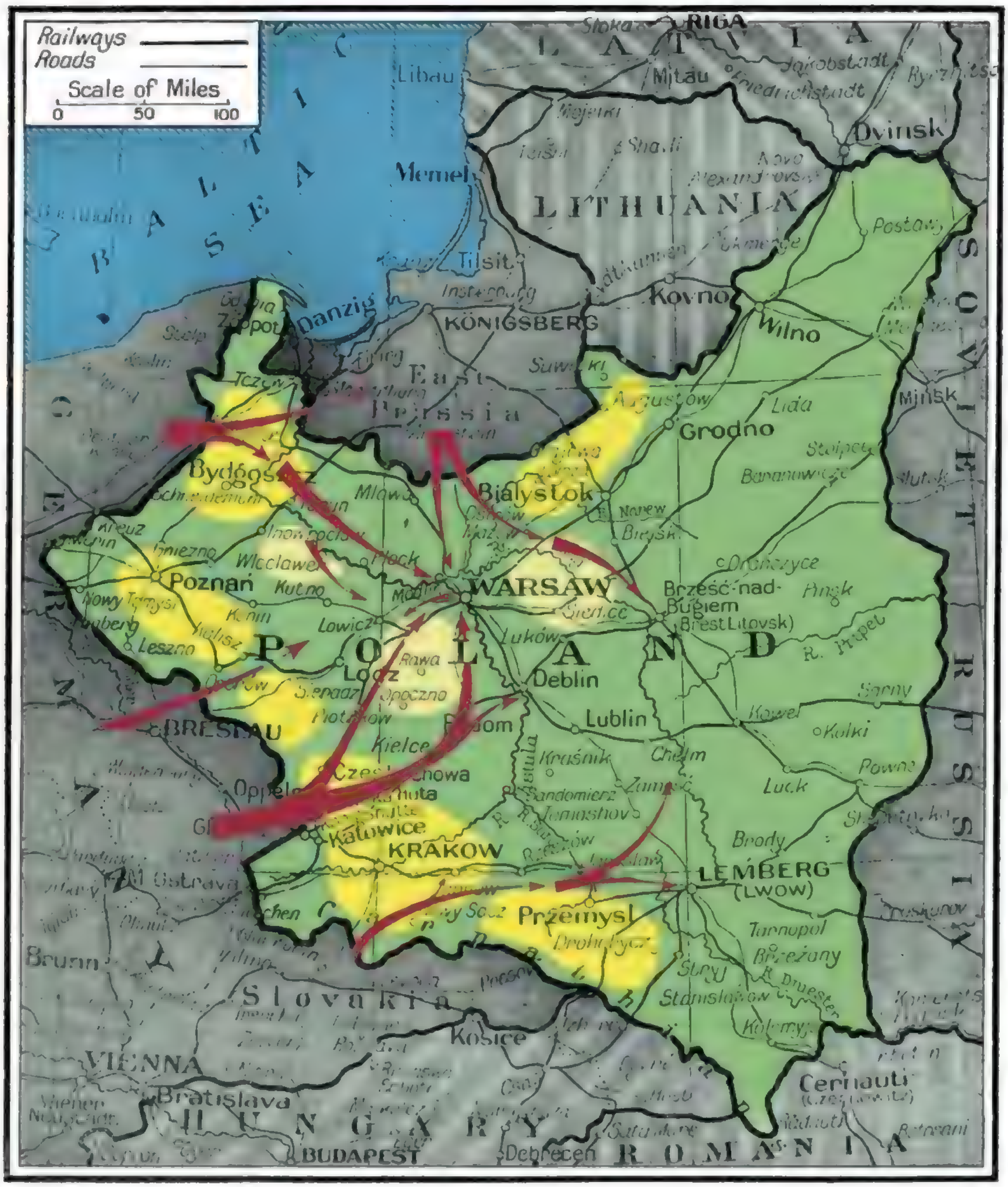
SPQR

Poland 1939

WHAT *REALLY* HAPPENED?

Military history writer Ian Maycock rethinks the Nazi 'blitzkrieg' that destroyed Poland in September 1939.



Photos: © WIPL

Prominent among the numerous myths surrounding the Second World War is that of the 'lightning war' (*Blitzkrieg*) waged by Germany against Poland during September 1939. Initiating their 'revolutionary' doctrine of warfare, the Germans overran Poland within four weeks, destroying the antiquated enemy air-force on the ground as Polish ground forces tried to salvage some honour with reckless cavalry charges against massed Panzers.

This version of the campaign took root in the immediate post-war years and has remained largely unchallenged ever since. Most of the original accounts were written by authors with a vested interest, however – German generals like Guderian and Mellenthin, who were trying to woo the victorious Allies, or progenitors of the blitzkrieg doctrine like British military theorist Basil Liddell Hart, anxious to demonstrate how effective their pet theories had proved in practice.

During the September war, despite patent deficiencies, the Polish Army in fact fought stubbornly from an almost indefensible position, inflicting heavy casualties on a numerically and qualitatively superior opponent. Western observers' disparaging remarks about the incompetence of 'stiff-necked' Poles should be contrasted with the dismal performance of Anglo-French forces in spring 1940 – despite their having superior forces in the field.

Above A German *Panzerkampfwagen* Mark IV, the heavyweight of the *Wehrmacht* during the 1939 invasion of Poland, with a 75mm gun in the turret.

Interwar Poland

Though it gained independence in 1920, the foundling Polish Republic found itself in a precarious diplomatic position. Following the death of the dictator Józef Piłsudski in 1935, Polish foreign policy under the stewardship of Colonel Józef Beck had tried to steer a course of non-alignment between its two powerful neighbours.

A non-aggression treaty had been signed with the Soviet Union in 1932, and a ten-year pact with Germany in 1934. On these two building-blocks Polish policy proceeded in its inevitably contradictory course. The possibility of an alliance with Nazi Germany against the Soviet Union was floated during a rare harmonious interlude in German–Polish relations. Alternatively, a preventative war against Hitler was suggested by the Poles at a time when appeasement was the favoured policy of Western leaders.

Polish policy reflected the state's precarious geography and geopolitics. It lacked strong natural frontiers in either the west or the east – the Polish landmass is part of a single great plain that extends across northern Germany into the Russian steppes – and its neighbours on either side were historic enemies both of whom constituted a clear and present danger to Polish national integrity. Unfortunately, Polish foreign policy was fated to be forever out of step with the prevailing whims of European politics.

Left Poland in 1939. The geopolitical significance of the Polish Corridor is immediately apparent – it exists to provide Poland with access to the sea, but its effect is to cut off East Prussia from the rest of Germany. The map also reveals the exceptional vulnerability of Poland, especially after the German seizure of Czechoslovakia: wedged between Germany and Russia, both traditional enemies, it lacks defensible natural frontiers. The arrows show the German invasion routes.

Appeasement

France and Britain had put out peace feelers towards Moscow with the idea of forming a common front against Hitler. Stalin, however, doubted the resolve of the Allies and saw their overtures as a mere ▷

Cavalry were capable of moving across the vast and often difficult terrain of central and eastern Europe.

German cavalry

Polish cavalry

Polish tanks

The popular caricature of Polish cavalry attacking German tanks is highly misleading. On the open plains of the Eastern Front, all armies found a use for cavalry in the first half of the 20th century, and all still relied heavily on horse-drawn transport. And the Poles did have tanks. The problem was that German tanks were bigger, better, and more numerous, and the Germans had superior armoured-warfare doctrine.

ruse for entangling the USSR in a war with Germany.

Besides, in the event of war, Soviet troops would have to cross Polish territory in order to assist their Western allies. This would have been opposed by the Poles, who believed that once Soviet troops occupied their territory they would be impossible to shift; rightly so, as the events of 1945 would prove.

Scornful Western liberals accused the Poles of colluding with the Nazis, while Poland in turn mistrusted the guarantees of the Western powers, who had left them to battle the Soviets alone in 1920.

The abandonment of Czechoslovakia following the Munich Agreement of 1938 exposed the brittle resolve of France and Britain. Nevertheless, on 1 April, the French and British governments guaranteed Poland's borders, threatening to go to war should they be violated. This was merely a belated attempt to deter Hitler from embarking on war, and an acknowledgment that appeasement had run its course. In the event, there would be precious little the Allies could do to help Poland.

The Pomorsta cavalry brigade caught a German infantry battalion in open ground and decimated it.

The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact (23 August 1939), a secret protocol of which proposed the division of Poland between Hitler and Stalin, effectively signalled the death-knell of the Polish Republic. Hitler, having digested Czechoslovakia, now turned his attention to absorbing the free city of Danzig, separated from the Reich by the 'Polish Corridor'. As the German propaganda machine stoked up the alleged mistreatment of German citizens within Poland, both sides prepared for war.

Polish cavalry

Polish defensive doctrine in the event of war was reliant on the intervention of a powerful ally, namely France. The Polish armed forces were not capable of defeating either the Nazis or the Soviets alone, but could perhaps draw the teeth of an aggressor until outside help arrived.

German horse-drawn transport

The Polish Army was not well equipped or organised in the summer of 1939, but criticism that it relied too heavily on cavalry is wide of the mark. Cavalry constituted a mere 10% of the Army. Besides, on the Eastern Front during the First World War, and during the subsequent Russian Civil War and Russo-Polish War, all of them conflicts involving fast manoeuvre over wide open spaces with few roads, cavalry had played a key role.

Even in the Second World War, mounted units would prove themselves capable of moving across the vast and often difficult terrain of central and eastern Europe, harassing the enemy at vulnerable points. Polish cavalry tactics eschewed the much-vaunted charge attributed to them by foreign observers, preferring instead to advance quickly before dismounting to engage the enemy, in the manner of mounted infantry.

Polish armour

The Poles were undoubtedly deficient in modern equipment. Despite late-in-the-day attempts to make good the shortcomings, there was little in the way of motorisation, and artillery was mostly horse-drawn.

Armour was limited. Even though four cavalry divisions had been earmarked for mechanisation, only one tank brigade would be available on the outbreak of war. The Army had numerous light tankettes and the excellent 37mm Bofors anti-tank gun, but financial limitations prevented any further modernisation. In 1939 Poland could field approximately 2.5 million men including reservists and National Guard volunteers, but this was a mass army on the 1914 model.

Plan Z (*zachód* or 'west') relied on assurances from the Western Allies (notably France) that help would be forthcoming before Poland was overrun. This tenuous strategy was made more dubious by the near indefensibility of the Polish borders, a situation that went from bad to worse when Germany occupied Slovakia: Poland, whose plains make excellent tank country, could then be attacked on three sides. Though the rivers through the interior of the country provided some natural obstacles, defending them would mean abandoning crucial economic assets.

The Polish High Command chose to stage a fighting withdrawal, hoping that the Army would become more concentrated as it retreated into the heart of the country. This plan was at best optimistic – and, in the event, would prove wholly inadequate in the face of the aggressive assault the German High Command was planning.

These strategic deficiencies reflected the fact that the Polish Army had failed to grasp the lessons inherent in the evolution of modern warfare, particularly with regard to the use of armour in rapid offensive manoeuvre.

German doctrine

The German Army, meanwhile, had found itself steering a course between 'modernisers' and 'traditionalists'. The modernisers, who were favoured by Hitler, had striven to strengthen the *Wehrmacht*'s mechanised forces. Practical lessons from the First World War combined with recent experiences in the Spanish Civil War had been merged with the doctrine of innovative military writers such as J F C Fuller and Liddell Hart to form what would later be dubbed 'blitzkrieg'.

Blitzkrieg, however, was a tactical innovation rather than a revolutionary form of warfare. The idea of striking at the opponent's weakest point, exploiting a breakthrough, and then outflanking or encircling the enemy was as old as war itself.

Towards the end of the First World War, offensives had been launched by more thoughtful military practitioners in essentially this way. Artillery barrages were concentrated at fixed points along the enemy's front. These points were then infiltrated by small groups of highly trained 'stormtroopers' whose goal was to gain ground and penetrate deeply by bypassing enemy strongpoints. These offensives dispensed with the costly ▷

Above Most of the fighting in Poland was done by infantry, not tanks. Crucial to German victory were fast-moving, hard-punching infantry assault groups capable of infiltrating opposing lines and penetrating deeply into the Polish rear.

frontal assaults that had previously characterised the conflict and produced startling results.

Blitzkrieg built on these foundations, combining tanks, aircraft, and motorised infantry acting in conjunction, so as to achieve maximum gains with minimum losses. The use of dive-bombers as tactical support weapons was innovative, as was the use of tanks *en masse.*

Contrary to popular belief, however, the German Army at the onset of the Polish campaign was not a highly mechanised war-machine. Barely 7% of the Army was mechanised, the rest remaining horse-drawn. True, Hitler favored mechanisation, and, mindful of the effects of attritional warfare on civilian morale, wanted to avoid protracted, attritional campaigns.

The offensive nature of blitzkrieg meant, however, that mechanised units could easily become separated from their supporting infantry, and their pencil-thin fronts were always highly vulnerable to counter-attacks. This played on the minds of German strategists. The Poles, however, would be in no position to exploit the possibilities; indeed, stationing troops so close to the border played straight into Hitler's hands.

German planning

The German plan of attack aimed at destroying the Polish forces before they could withdraw behind river obstacles. Had the Poles massed behind the rivers, the initial German assault might have run out of steam before the mass of their forces had become engaged.

The German assault forces were divided into two army groups, North and South. Army Group North consisted of two armies (630,000 men) under von Küchler and von Kluge, whose aim was to advance across the Polish Corridor between East and West Prussia, before striking southwards towards Warsaw. Army Group South consisted of three armies under von Rundstedt (882,000 men), which would strike north towards the Polish capital. Thus, in theory at least, the Polish forces would be crushed between them as if in a vice.

Having stoked up tension with demands for the return of the free city of Danzig to the Reich throughout the summer of 1939, Hitler eschewed any formal declaration of war. Despite an initial postponement of the invasion date from 26 August, German Special Forces tried unsuccessfully to seize a railway tunnel at Jabłonka beneath the Carpathian Mountains. Elsewhere guerrilla units stepped up sabotage activities, while the German media waxed lyrical about Polish 'atrocities' against German minorities.

Polish mobilisation was slow despite the Poles being fully aware of German troop movements. Acting on French advice, mobilisation had been deliberately slowed down in the hope that a negotiated settlement could be found.

On 31 August the Germans staged an 'incident' at the border checkpoint at Gliwice in Upper Silesia, where SD men 'attacked' the German radio station, leaving behind them the bodies of several concentration-camp inmates who had been murdered and then dressed in Polish uniforms.

The German attack

At 0400 hours the German battleship *Schleswig-Holstein*, having slipped its moorings in Gdańsk (Danzig), began bombarding the Polish garrison on the thin peninsula of Westerplatte. At the same time the SS tried to take control of the local post office.

The post office was fiercely defended but capitulated when the Germans poured petrol into the basement. Many of the defenders were subsequently shot. The Westerplatte garrison held 'the Polish Verdun' for a week before surrendering.

The vulnerable Polish forces in the Pomeranian Corridor, having been attacked by the German 4th Army in overwhelming strength, staged a fighting retreat southwards. It was during this desperate operation that the Pomorsta cavalry brigade caught a German infantry battalion in open ground and decimated it. Unfortunately for the Poles, German armoured cars arrived to reinforce their hard-pressed comrades. The Polish cavalry was forced to withdraw, leaving

The Polish air force often took to the skies with patched-up machines.

The first among millions. **Above** a polish boy sits amid the rubble of Warsaw. **Below** two civilians, a father and his daughter, share the same stretcher.

several of their number dead. Italian journalists appearing on the scene promptly propagated the myth of reckless Polish cavalry charging German tanks.

While the 4th Army was crossing the Pomeranian Corridor, the 3rd Army struck south from East Prussia towards Warsaw, though their assault was stemmed temporarily across the fortified line of Mława.

Meanwhile, Army Group South, containing the bulk of the German forces, attempted to encircle Polish Army Groups Kraków and Łódź before driving on Warsaw. At Mokra, Polish cavalry armed with anti-tank guns and supported by an armoured train inflicted heavy losses on the advancing German Panzers before being forced to withdraw. The German armoured attacks were considered 'ill-coordinated' and the troops 'panicky'. Nevertheless, the Germans eventually succeeded in driving a wedge between Polish units, making resistance more sporadic.

Elsewhere, German units operating out of Slovakia contested the Dunajec River with Polish border troops, the advance stalling due to a combination of natural barriers (the Carpathian Mountains) and tenacious resistance.

The air war

Contrary to popular opinion, the Polish air force was not destroyed on the ground during the first few days of the conflict. The Poles had cleverly dispersed their aircraft to remote airfields throughout the country, and the Germans had to content themselves largely with strafing dummy planes.

The Polish aircraft (mostly outdated PZL.11s) were technically inferior to those of the Luftwaffe (Me109s) and unable to prevent German domination of the skies. The air force nevertheless ▷

gave a good account of itself, often taking to the skies with patched-up machines. The most effective Polish formation was the Pursuit Brigade, defending Warsaw, which accounted for numerous German aircraft.

Late mobilisation on 30 August, one day before the German invasion, hampered Polish responses. Stunned by the ferocity of the German attack, the Polish High Command tried to improvise counter-attacks. However, the hangover from their botched mobilisation coupled with the Luftwaffe's continual disruption of lines of communication made concentrating troops difficult. As the Polish army was forced back on Warsaw, General Rydz-Śmigły ordered a withdrawal to the eastern bank of the Vistula. The decision to move the High Command from the capital to Brest-Litovsk was a blunder, as Polish generals became increasingly out of touch with their units.

The German High Command had problems too: it was anxious about units being committed too far east and becoming increasingly separated from their depots and railheads, and was conscious too of the threat of a French counter-offensive on their exposed western front.

This fear proved groundless: the French contented themselves with timid probes into the Saar on 7 September. Incredibly, despite encountering little or no resistance, they promptly withdrew several days later.

Warsaw

The Poles mounted a determined counter-attack along the River Bzura which took the Germans by surprise, allowing a more orderly withdrawal towards Warsaw. The advance gradually bogged down, however, and under heavy aerial bombardment the Poles found themselves in danger of encirclement. The failure of the Bzura offensive made further organised resistance virtually impossible.

Despite the evacuation of the government on 4 September, the Poles decided to defend Warsaw. The small garrison and civilian volunteers improvised field fortifications and successfully warded off two German attacks. Temporary relief was provided by the Polish counter-attack at Bzura. However, the Luftwaffe then subjected the city to intense aerial bombardment.

The collapse of resistance outside Warsaw enabled the Germans to choke the capital with 13 divisions (approximately a third of their total). The siege lasted from the 8 to 26 September, and cost the lives of approximately 40,000 civilians. A massive air bombardment served as a prelude to a ground attack which, after much fierce fighting, was successful. Bereft of water, ammunition, and medical supplies, the Poles formally surrendered on 28 September.

The Soviet attack

The Polish position was rendered hopeless by the fact that Soviet forces, in accordance with the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, had invaded from the east on 17 September. All available Polish units having been stripped from the eastern borders, resistance was practically non-existent, though some Polish and Soviet units clashed in Galicia. Rydz-Śmigły had no option but to order all remaining Polish units to retreat into Romania. To all intents and purposes, the campaign was over.

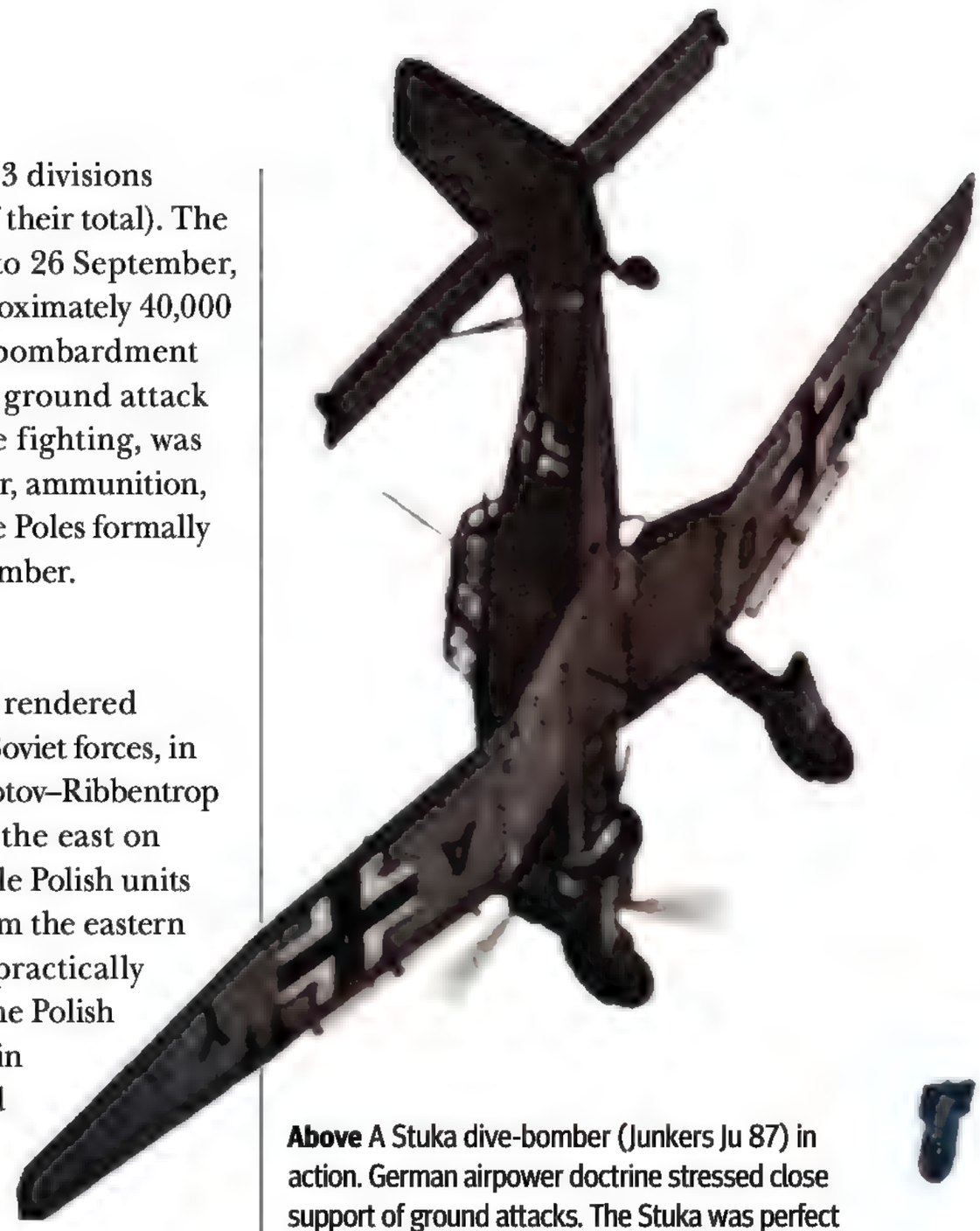
The victors created a demarcation line along the rivers San and Bug. Poland, having lost approximately 60,000 men killed and 140,000 wounded, was partitioned between two brutal regimes.

Bitterness that they had been left to fight alone by selfish allies had to be tempered with the knowledge that the country's naïve foreign policy had left the Poles dependent on the good intentions of foreign powers. The truth was that, given Polish deficiencies in men and equipment, together with the indefensibility of their borders, the war was unwinnable. Under occupation, on the other hand, the Poles would form the largest underground army in Europe.

Blitzkrieg propaganda

Despite the strident content of German newsreels, the success of the Polish campaign had really been built on traditional methods of concentration and mobilisation that owed as much to the 19th-century 'lightning wars' of German unification as it did to the tank. True, the Panzers had played an important role: Hoepner's XVI corps had advanced 140 miles in under seven days during its drive on Warsaw, while Guderian had driven 50 miles in 12 hours *en route* to the Vistula.

But these achievements should be seen in context. In the open ground to the north, especially in the latter stages of the campaign, the Panzers had encountered little effective resistance.



Above A Stuka dive-bomber (Junkers Ju 87) in action. German airpower doctrine stressed close support of ground attacks. The Stuka was perfect in this role. Its wailing siren spread fear and panic.

For most of the campaign, on the other hand, the armoured formations had found themselves subordinated to the needs of the infantry. The German High Command had been reluctant to let the Panzers off the leash, using them more as a spearhead than as an independent arm.

German casualties were approximately 10,572 killed and 30,322 wounded. In marked contrast to the protracted attritional campaigns of the First World War, the blitzkrieg in Poland (and later France) provided Hitler with victories that were relatively light in terms of casualties, resources, and duration.

The propaganda boon was immense, and the contemporary German newsreel version of events has created a vivid image of blitzkrieg that remains largely definitive even today.

Yet, in the wake of his astounding successes in Poland and France, Hitler would launch Operation Barbarossa in 1941, where, in the vast open spaces of Russia, the shortcomings of blitzkrieg would soon become all too apparent. Facing defeat in Russia, the *Wehrmacht* would have to revert back to waging the very static, defensive war that blitzkrieg had been designed to avert.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ian Maycock is a freelance writer and teacher living in Warsaw, Poland.

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Tripoli Trappola

PART 1: THE BATTLE FOR TRIPOLI

Italy came late to industrialisation and empire-building. In a two-part feature, **Julian Spilsbury** takes a hard look at the last big colonial war before 1914 – the Italo-Turkish War for control of Libya.

The slow crumbling of the Ottoman Empire was the main pre-occupation of European statesmen for much of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The superpowers were concerned to limit the damage and divide the spoils. By 1911, despite a modernising revolution by 'Young Turk' army officers, which had ousted Sultan Abdulhamid II, Turkey's grip on much of her empire in North Africa and the Balkans was dangerously weak.

Italy – a young nation united only in 1861 – was keen to join the first rank of European powers and acquire an African empire. Alarmed by the French acquisition of Tunis in 1881, she had signed, in 1902, a secret treaty with France allowing her freedom of action in the two Ottoman *vilayets* (regions) that made up Libya: Tripolitania in the west and Cyrenaica in the east. These had been part of the old Roman Empire and the scene, more recently, of increasing Italian economic infiltration.

By March 1911, the government of Giuseppe Giolitti – tempted by rumours of mineral wealth, rich well-watered land fit for colonisation, and a population disaffected with Ottoman rule – was making increasingly bellicose noises. An Austrian-brokered compromise, offering a transfer of Libya to Italian rule but

Above The Scramble for Africa triggered a succession of Islamic-inspired revolts against European imperialism. When Italy invaded Libya in 1911, the Ottoman Empire stirred its nominal Muslim subjects into a fierce jihad. Here, Libyan Muslims swear an oath of fidelity to the Ottomans.

'Hot blasts of air passed rolling overhead, and amid the choking, yellow smoke a shower of black detritus covered and begrimed us at each discharge.'

Italian naval officer, October 1911

under nominal Ottoman sovereignty – an arrangement similar to that of the British in Egypt – was rejected. On 29 September 1911, the Italian Government declared war on the Ottoman Empire.

The bombardment of Tripoli

The previous evening, an Italian fleet had appeared off Tripoli. The Ottoman authorities there were informed that the city was now blockaded and that at the end of three days, unless they surrendered, it would be bombarded.

The Ottoman commander, Nesciat Bey, received orders from Constantinople not to surrender, but to retire into the interior and await events. No surrender being received, the Italian fleet commenced its bombardment at 3.30pm on 3 October.

So as not to abandon the city without any show of resistance, Nesciat Bey deployed a party of artillerymen to man the guns of the coastal forts. But their Krupp guns – with a maximum range of 5.5 miles – were outranged by the guns of the Italian fleet, and not a single Turkish shell even reached the Italian ships.

An officer on one of the Italian battleships wrote: 'We fired by batteries, ten rounds at a time. Hot blasts of air passed rolling overhead, and amid the choking, yellow smoke a shower of black detritus covered and begrimed us at each discharge. After about two hours' firing, the Hamadie fort ceased to reply...

'The Red Fort and the Lighthouse battery were for some time wrapped in wreaths of fire and smoke. When the wind cleared the air, we saw the Red Fort demolished and completely gutted, whilst the Lighthouse battery had vanished as if by magic, annihilated by the terrific explosion of the big Italian shells.'

By five o'clock, the last Ottoman fort had fallen silent.

Invasion (sort of)

The Italian commander, Admiral Faravelli, now found himself in a quandary. The Ottomans had decamped and the city was wide open for occupation, but the expeditionary force had not yet arrived. Diplomacy had raced ahead of military preparedness and, in any case, the Italian Army was ill-prepared for a campaign against an active and determined enemy.

As Bismarck had commented a few years earlier, 'Italy has a big appetite but very poor teeth!' When the first army contingent did sail from Naples, it was at once diverted to effect a landing at Tobruk. It was not before 10 October that the first Italian troops were landed, until which time the city was occupied, and a thin defensive cordon established, by a force of 1,600 sailors.

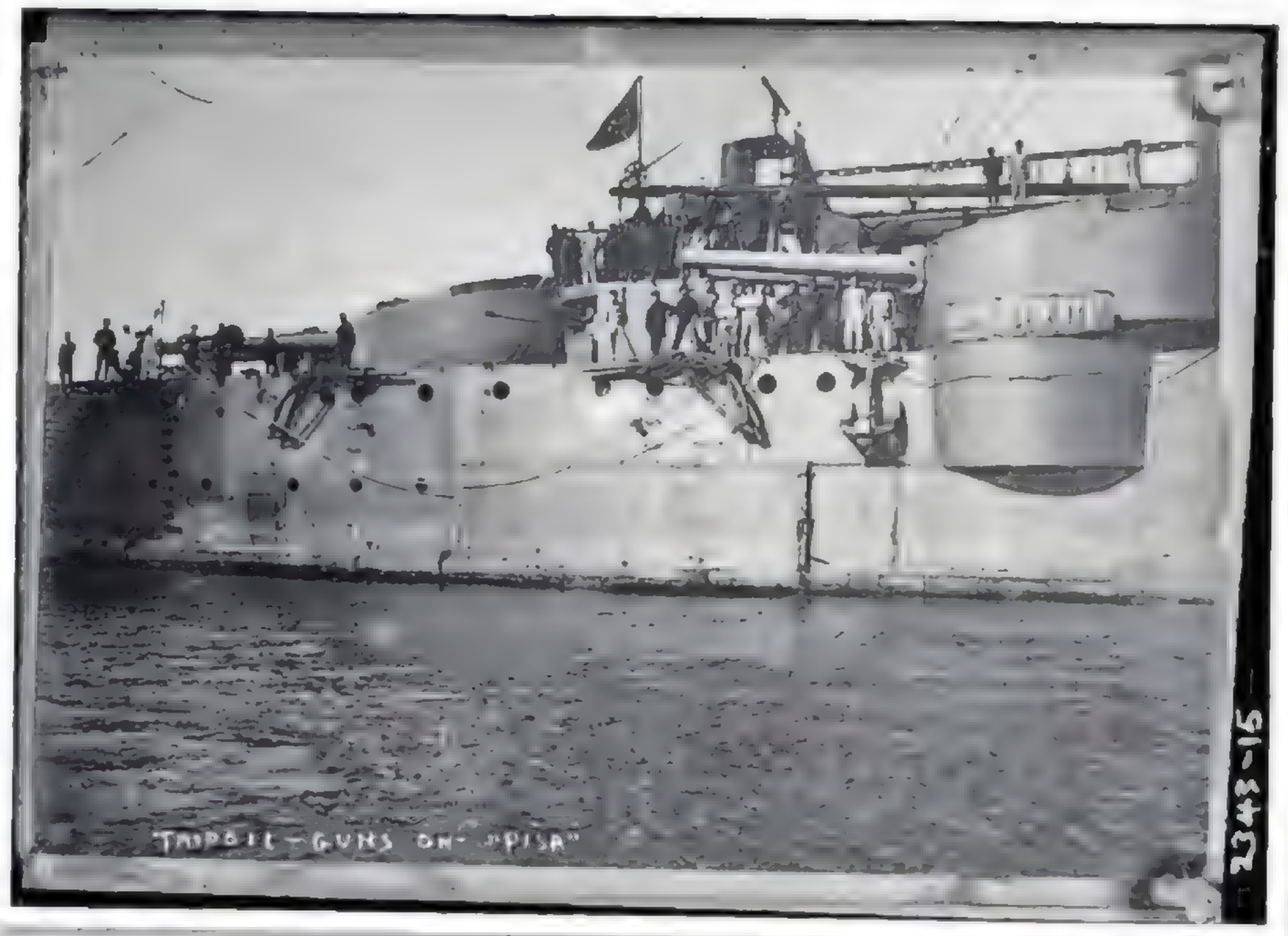
The weakness of the initial landing force and the precariousness of their position had two consequences for the Italians. First, it gave the Arab population a poor impression of Italian strength. Second, it gave Nesciat Bey time to organise resistance – time he did not waste.

The Ottomans organise

Von Moltke, who had trained the Ottoman Army, once commented that Turks only really start fighting at the point when most other people would give up. Nesciat Bey seemed determined to proved Moltke right.

Abandoning Tripoli and the Krupps guns in the shore batteries, he marched his force inland, setting up headquarters at Ain Zara, ten miles south-east of Tripoli. Beforehand, he had distributed Mauser rifles and ammunition landed from the merchant ship *Derna* in the days before hostilities began among the local Arab population. Once established at Ain Zara, he raised the Green Standard of the Prophet and appealed to his co-religionists to help him drive out the infidel. Nesciat Bey ▷

Below The Italian battleship *Pisa* anchored off Tripoli in 1911. Naval gunpower enabled the invaders to gain rapid entry into the city at the start of the war. Everything got harder after that.



Above The Italian military elite, the Bersaglieri, played a prominent part in the Libyan campaign. They were famous for their cockerel-feather plumes.

Top An Italian infantryman in the new grey-green camouflage uniform introduced shortly before the Libyan campaign. Italian soldiers of this period – the much-abused *fanti* – earned the nickname *grigioverdi*, 'the grey-green ones'.

had launched an Islamic jihad against the European invader.

His appeal – backed up with liberal supplies of rifles and ammunition – rallied many of the desert tribesmen to his side. Of all this the Italians seem to have been unaware. Their intelligence led them to believe that the Arabs of Tripolitania were disaffected with Ottoman rule and would respond favourably to an Italian occupation. They were in for a rude awakening.

Inland from Tripoli lay an oasis and a network of small Arab villages formed of individual houses, gardens, orchards, and olive-groves – perfect country for infiltration tactics. The oasis extended inland from Tripoli for a mile to the edge of the desert. To the west and south the Italians looked out over comparatively empty country. To the east, however, the oasis continued along the coast for 12 miles or so – a belt of close country between one or two miles wide.

The Italian defensive perimeter around Tripoli was centred on the oasis, against the south and western sides of which – no doubt as part of a deception plan – the Ottomans and their Arab auxiliaries were busy probing. No serious attack seems to have been anticipated against the eastern side, which was thinly held by three companies of the 11th Bersaglieri.

> 'The Bersaglieri get killed like flies … We can't fire back because we can't tell where the shots come from …'
>
> *Italian NCO, 11th Bersaglieri*

The Ottoman-Arab attack on Tripoli

At 8am on 23 October, the Turks attacked on all sides of the Italian perimeter. The attacks on the western and southern sectors were only feints, and the attackers – mostly Arab horsemen – soon melted away into the desert. On the eastern side, however, it was very different.

Here, the two leading Italian companies, the 4th and 5th, were overwhelmed and scattered, losing 343 out of 400 men, while the reserve company, the 6th – brought up in support – soon found itself under fire from front and rear.

News of the attack on the perimeter

Above The first phase of the Libyan campaign turned into a siege of Italian-occupied Tripoli. The Italians established a defensive perimeter but lacked the forces to make it wholly secure.

had been received with very mixed feelings – with alarm amounting to panic by the European community and the Jews, and with excitement by the Arabs of the town, many of whom responded to the cry 'Death to the Christians!' by attacking isolated Italian soldiers with knives and swords or by grabbing rifles and rushing to attack the Italian perimeter from the inside.

A corporal of the 11th Bersaglieri described his experience in a letter home: 'An order to advance in support of the troops already engaged forces us to cross open ground under a hail of shot, and this is where the Bersaglieri get killed like flies, because not only are the Turks pegging away at our front, but all the natives of the oasis are also hard at it in our rear, on our flanks, everywhere. We can't fire back because we can't tell where the shots come from. With ranks decimated we reach the trenches and keep right on firing till late at night …'

The defence of El Hanni

The 6th Company fell back to the plateau of El Hanni and there made a stand. 'I wish to put on record …', wrote the special correspondent of *The Times*, '… the splendid manner in which the young Italian infantry in the danger zone on Monday coped with a situation which would have tried the oldest soldiers.'

The plateau of El Hanni was considered 'the key to Tripoli', and the fighting here continued all day. Reinforcements rushed up from Tripoli had to fight their way forward, and it was not until nightfall – with sporadic sniping continuing all over the oasis – that the gap caused by the destruction of two companies of Bersaglieri was plugged.

The next two days saw efforts by the Italians to clear the inside of their defensive perimeter – extensive sweeps during which Italian bodies were found that had been mutilated in death or tortured while alive. The Italians responded with reprisals that caused much hostile comment in the European press.

On 26 October, the Ottomans renewed their efforts with an attack on El Hanni by Arabs supported by Turkish regulars, which was defeated only after hard fighting by the Bersaglieri, reinforced by sailors, machine-guns, and heavy artillery. The fighting around the cavalry barracks was so intense that at one point Italian field-guns were firing shrapnel timed to burst at the muzzle at a range of 200 yards.

A defensive box

An officer from the garrison at El Hanni wrote: 'Round the hill our lines formed a sort of square, which the Arab masses, with fanatical boldness, tried several times to surround. No less than 3,000 of them, entrenched at 300 yards distance, ▷

went for our position again and again with astounding ferocity.

'They made assault after assault, getting within a few yards of our trenches, and taking cover behind low walls in the oasis, trying to fight their way through where they fancied us weakest, and rushing madly on our fire, only to fall close up against our trenches.'

It is interesting to note that – as with British accounts of the Sudan campaign – Arab courage is ascribed in Italian memoirs to 'fanaticism', in contrast to the disciplined valour of European troops!

The same officer gives us a description of the Arab dead that strewed the ground before his trenches the following day. 'They lie all in one direction, as though some gigantic scythe had passed over the place. Their heads are towards our trenches, which shows that they were running when struck down. Wrapped in the coarse, white barracan, they wear, even in death, a look of fury …

'All are armed with Mausers, and carry queer yataghans and scimitars. They wear amulets fastened to their leather shoulder-belts, and in their knapsacks are little bags of salt, packets of tea and sugar, and in many cases a copy of the Koran, not infrequently copied out by hand.'

Ernest Bennett, a British journalist with the Ottoman-Arab forces, heard an account of the fighting from an Arab wounded in the battle. 'The Italians hid themselves in holes and fired at us without our being able to see them. So at night the Turkish officers made the Arabs, too, dig holes for themselves.

'Then, one morning, all the Arabs rushed upon the Italians. But they, with some big guns which went pan-pan-pan [Maxims], slew many of the Arabs. Nevertheless, the Arabs chased the Italians from their holes, and there they found guns and cartridges and the guns that go pan-pan-pan. But as they could not make use of these [Maxims], they left them there.'

'Tripoli is a trap'

The Italian press tried to minimise the events of 23-26 October, presenting it as a failed uprising and lauding the heroics of the Bersaglieri and their commander, Colonel Fara. But the fact was that several units had been practically annihilated and the Italian line had been broken twice in four days.

It was soon decided to shorten the perimeter – 'because of the effluvium of the unburied corpses', was the official excuse – and El Hanni, the scene of so much desperate fighting, was abandoned.

The Ottomans soon occupied the position, but found that 'the key to Tripoli' was useless to them. Short of artillery, the best they could do was land a few shells in the town centre. As a jumping-off point for an assault on Tripoli the plateau was useless for the Ottomans because it was covered by the guns of the Italian fleet.

> 'They made assault after assault, getting within a few yards of our trenches, and rushing madly on our fire, only to fall close up against our trenches.'
>
> *Italian officer, October 1911*

Even so, the constant rifle fire on the eastern sector of the perimeter, the shelling of the Konak (governor's palace), and the abandonment by the Italians of positions previously held, served to create the impression – in Libya and the outside world – that Tripoli was under siege. *Tripoli trappola* ('Tripoli a trap') became the accepted wisdom in Italy.

The German Ambassador to Rome was scathing in his judgement of Italian military prowess. In a letter to the German Chancellor, Bethmann-Hollweg, he wrote: 'Since people have seen that the African adventure is not just a carnival caper and that the Arabs don't shoot with confetti but with bullets, popular enthusiasm is dying down.'

The shadow of Adowa

The Italian Government and military had been haunted from the outset by the spectre of a previous African adventure. In 1895, an Italian army operating out of Eritrea had been overwhelmed and massacred at Adowa by Emperor Menelik's Ethiopians, with a loss of 10,000 killed, wounded, and taken prisoner – the worst defeat ever inflicted on a European colonial army by native troops.

That disaster had brought down the government, and public opinion about the Libyan venture had been ambivalent from the start, with many members of the powerful Socialist Party – including a young Benito Mussolini – against the war, and even King Victor Emmanuel II expressing reservations.

With Adowa in their minds, and aware at last that Libya would not be the 'military promenade' they had anticipated, the Italian Government now lurched from complacency to extreme caution. The Italian Commander-in-Chief in Libya, General Caneva, was informed – and the order penetrated downwards – that no operation was to be mounted that involved any risk. Reconnoitring parties were under strict orders to withdraw as soon as they made contact with the enemy.

Airpower

A safer method of reconnaissance was provided by air-power – in which the Italians enjoyed unchallenged supremacy. The Italians had employed fixed-wing aircraft from the outset. During the fighting on 23 October, Captain Carlo Piazza, commander of the Royal Italian Army's air detachment, carried out the world's first aerial reconnaissance – flying a Bleriot XI monoplane over the Ottoman lines from Tripoli to Azizia and taking one photograph with a plate camera.

In further fighting on 1 November, his comrade Sottotenente Guilio Gavotte carried out the first ever aerial bombing – dropping 2kg Cipelli grenades from a Taube aircraft on Ottoman troops at Taguira oasis and Ain Zara.

Airships were landed, too, and once suitable hangers had been erected were used to try and compensate for a lack of adequate maps and knowledge of the ▷

Above A new factor in war: the Italians used aircraft for reconnaissance and bombing during the Libyan campaign.

Above Artillery outpost in the desert during Italo Turkish war, 1911.
Inset Italian troops entering Tripoli.

terrain. Later, they too were employed for aerial bombardment.

Here was one aspect of the Italian operations which did impress the outside world, and the following year saw the establishment of a number of military air services, including the German, Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian, and Japanese.

Stalemate or breakout?

Ottoman-Arab probing attacks on the Italian perimeter continued throughout October and November 1911. Ernest Bennett described a typical attack: 'The enemy's outposts frequently occupied empty houses for shelter and protection. The Arabs would suddenly rush upon them, and the Italians would either bolt or else block up the doorway.

"'In this case," said an officer who led the Arabs, "if we found it difficult to get at the enemy, we would bring a field gun into position at close range and blow a hole in the wall of the house, while the Arabs threw themselves flat on the ground as the shell whizzed a few feet over their heads and fragments of the wall fell over them, sometimes inflicting wounds, and even serious wounds. Then the Arabs would rush in, and it was all up with any Italians who failed to slip past them. In one house we slew nine in a lump."'

Reports of Italians' reluctance to engage the enemy were soon circulating in the world's press – yet, paradoxically, the Italian Government's 'no risk' policy went hand-in-hand with a hardening of attitude.

On 5 November, fearful that the great powers would intervene and force a compromise peace on the combatants, Italy formally annexed the Ottoman provinces. Simultaneously, throughout November, Caneva was reinforced until he could field 34 battalions of infantry (25,000 men), seven batteries of field guns, and nine batteries of mountain guns. Heavy siege guns – 6-inch guns and 8-inch mortars – were to follow, as well as askaris and spahi cavalry from Eritrea, and (another first) armoured cars.

On 26 November the Italians advanced to recapture Fort Mesri – at the extreme southern end of their eastern sector – and the stronghold of El Hanni itself, preparatory to an attack on the Ottoman headquarters at Ain Zara.

The war for Libya had only just begun.

NEXT TIME

THE ROAD TO WAR

MISSION CREEP

In the second part of his article on the Italo-Turkish War of 1911-1912, Julian Spilsbury charts the escalating scale of the conflict as the Italians push beyond Tripoli.

ROYAL NAVY
FLEET AIR ARM
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Short 184 - first aircraft to take part in a naval battle (1916)
Short S27 (replica) - first naval fixed wing aircraft 1912
Hawker P1052 - prototype swept wing sea hawk
Handley Page 115 - prototype delta wing aircraft
Supermarine Attacker - last remaining example
Westland Wyvern - last remaining example
Concorde 002 - First British build Concorde
Fairey Albacore - last remaining example

Some of the above aircraft might not be on public display at the time of your proposed visit. Please check website.

A GREAT WAR MUSEUM NEXT TO PARIS!

MUSÉE DE LA GRANDE GUERRE PAYS DE MEAUX

Built on the historic site of the first Battle of the Marne, the **Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux,** East of Paris, provides a fresh approach to the First World War, to discover its causes, its conduct and its consequences with regard to our world today.

An Incredible and Diverse Collection

Housing a collection unparalleled anywhere in Europe, the Musée de la Grande Guerre in Pays de Meaux offers a new vision of the First World War, through innovative scenography illustrating the great changes and upheavals in society that resulted from the conflict.

This collection is extraordinarily diverse, comprising almost 20,000 objects and 30,000 documents: armaments and artillery, items from everyday life on the front line or home front, heavy equipment, over 200 complete uniforms representing all the nations concerned as well as rich documentary and graphic arts collections.

The uniforms on display in the museum make up one of the largest collections in Europe devoted to the First World War. Individual and larger weapons and pieces of artillery make up the second category of items in the collection.

As featured in Lager Holidays' Today First World War Battlefield Tour 'Marne and the Battle of Verdun'
Tel: www.lager.co.uk
Tel: 0844 6862 440

WATERLOO: THE BATTLE THAT FORGED A CENTURY

KING'S COLLEGE LONDON

11TH AND 12TH SEPTEMBER 2013

KING'S College LONDON

King's College London is hosting a major international conference on the legacy of the Battle of Waterloo. Internationally recognised scholars will present papers discussing the battle and its impact on the nineteenth century and beyond. Panels will consider the following subjects:

- The effect of Waterloo on Britain
- The effect of Waterloo on France, Prussia, Russia and Central Europe
- Waterloo and the conduct of war
- Waterloo and European society
- Waterloo and art, culture and education

Keynote speakers:
- Professor Jeremy Black
- Professor Sir Hew Strachan
- Adam Zamoyski
- Professor Andrew Lambert
- Dr Anthony Seldon

The conference is being organised jointly by the Department of War Studies and Waterloo 200. For more information, see:

http://www.waterloo200.org/
www.kcl.ac.uk/warstudies

Tickets cost £40 for one day and £75 for both days, for all tickets purchased before 31 July. After this date, prices will be £50 and £90.

Student rates will be £20 for one day and £40 for two. Tickets available from King's College London: http://estore.kcl.ac.uk/

For further details, please contact Daniel Whittingham or Jonathan Krause:
daniel.whittingham@kcl.ac.uk
jonathan.krause@kcl.ac.uk.

MUSEUM GUIDE

With hundreds of military museums in the UK alone, how do you know which one will best suit your interests? Here, ***MHM*** has picked some of the best museums and exhibitions to visit this year, from hidden gems to long-established sites.

Museum of the Great War

Officially opened on 11 November 2011, the Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux is the only facility to be devoted exclusively to WWI in the Paris region

While 2014 does marks the beginning of the centenary, it also marks 100 years since the First Battle of the Marne – a decisive turning point in this war.

Built on the very site where this battle was waged, in Nord Seine-et-Marne, the Musée de la Grande Guerre du Pays de Meaux is directly concerned by this event. The museum has decided to make its own contribution by looking back at the active role that the British forces played in this battle.

The museum's collections, currently in storage, will be used. The Imperial War Museum, National Army Museum, both in London, as well as the In Flandersfields Museum in Ypres, will be exhibition partners, loaning artefacts and documents.

The *Etablissement de Communication et de Production Audiovisuelle de la Défense* (ECPAD), already one of the museum's partners, will provide the audiovisual archives on display in the exhibition. A bilingual catalogue of the exhibition will be published and a specific mediation – particularly for groups of schoolchildren – will be organised.

WHERE: Rue Lazare Ponticelli, 77100 Meaux, France
OPENING TIMES *May-Sept* 9.30am-6.30pm Mon, Wed-Sun. *Oct-Apr* 10am-5.30pm Mon, Wed-Sun.
CONTACT ***www.museedelagrandeguerre.eu***

The Muckleburgh Military Collection

THE UK'S LARGEST PRIVATELY OWNED MILITARY MUSEUM

The Muckleburgh Military Collection is located in Weybourne, North Norfolk and is set in 300 acres overlooking the beautiful North Norfolk coast. Since the museum opened in 1988, the collection has grown, now comprising 25 working tanks and tracked vehicles with thousands of items on display. It is the official home of the historical records for the Norfolk and Suffolk Yeomanry and has a life-size display of Copenhagen, the Duke of Wellington's horse. It can take around four hours to view all the displays in the museum, passing through the tank halls, artillery hall, diorama displays, vehicle rides, the shop, and the cafe with children's play area. A tank-driving experience is also available to book in advance for £100. We also have our own landing field. Please view www.muckleburgh.co.uk for full details of what is available, opening times, and entrance charges.

WHERE: The Muckleburgh Military Collection, Weybourne, Norfolk, NR25 7EH
OPENING TIMES: 28 March - 3 November 2013 10.00 am - 5.00 pm with last Admissions at 4.00 pm
CONTACT: 01263 588210
info@muckleburgh.co.uk
www.muckleburgh.co.uk

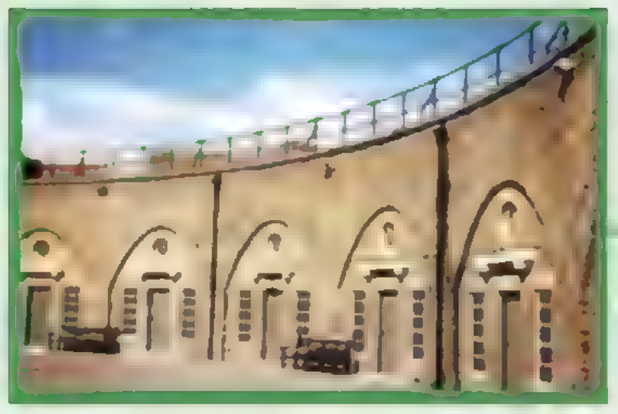
Redoubt Fortress & Military museum

One of the south coast's most historic landmarks, discover over 200 years of history at this Napoleonic fortress. Built to defend the south coast from Napoleon's forces, it still stands as a unique monument to that time and now houses the largest military collection of its kind in the south of England.

The Redoubt's latest exhibition, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Button Maker*, features military uniforms from 19th Century onwards, and focuses on the people that carefully crafted these magnificent examples of tailoring.

The fortress has an exciting programme of events for 2013, including military history lectures, film screenings, swing dances, and noonday cannon firing during the summer holidays. The Outpost café serves a delicious selection of pastries, cakes, and excellent coffee.

Entry to the parade ground and battlements is free, with admission charged only inside the fortress and military exhibition. You also get a free return visit with each ticket!



WHERE: Redoubt Fortress & Military Museum, Royal Parade, Eastbourne, East Sussex, BN22 7AQ
OPENING TIMES: Open 7 days a week 9am – 5pm
CONTACT: 01323 410300
redoubtmuseum@eastbourne.gov.uk
www.eastbournemuseums.co.uk

The museum is located in the fortifications that were built in 1874 to reinforce France's costal defence. Bastion 32 served as the headquarters for the French and Allied forces during the Battle of Dunkirk and Operation Dynamo. The *Memorial Du Souvenir* tells an incredible story of the battle and the evacuation of more than 338,000 allied soldiers from the pocket of Dunkirk.

The museum boasts a rich exhibition of maps and pictures, as well as both Allied and German military materiel. Scale models of the sites and of the operation, uniforms, and weapons complete the impressive collection.

Visiting the museum will also offer you the opportunity to see a 15-minute-long film using dramatic period footage. This film gives visitors an exciting overall view of the events which took place between May and June 1940.

WHERE: Courtines du Bastion 32, Rue des Chantiers de France, 59140 Dunkerque, A16 exit 60.
OPENING TIMES: 1 April - 30 September, 10am-12pm, 2pm-5pm
CONTACT: +33 (0)3 28262731
production@ot-dunkerque.fr
www.dynamo-dunkerque.com

WAR GAMES V&A Museum of Childhood

This exhibition explores the role of warfare in children's play from 1800 to the present day. Showcasing over 100 objects from the museum's collection, it examines the effect of conflict on toys and games through four sections. Playing at War raises the topic of children re-enacting war through a display of historic dressing-up clothes, toy weapons, and strategy games. On the Battlefield provides a chronological overview of combat, exploring how toys have imitated the evolution of weaponry. Reality to Fantasy looks at the change that came in the aftermath of the World Wars. The final section, Secret Weapons, reveals the use of toys in warfare – to train and influence, to comfort and heal, and to aid escape.

WHERE: V&A Museum of Childhood, Cambridge Heath Road, London E2 9PA
OPENING TIMES: 10am-5.45pm
CONTACT: 020 8983 5200
www.museumofchildhood.org.uk/wargames

Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm Museum

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC EXHIBITION OPENS AT THE FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM

The Battle of the Atlantic was the longest campaign of World War II. It began on the first day of the war and continued until the German surrender in 1945. The battle to control the shipping lanes across the Atlantic involved thousands of ships and cost the lives of more than 30,000 Merchant Navy seamen.

1943 is seen as the point at which the balance of success in this battle shifted in favour of the Allied Forces and 2013 is therefore, the year chosen to commemorate the 70th anniversary of this pivotal battle.

The Fleet Air Arm Museum's new exhibition dramatically displays a Fairey Swordfish, Fairey Fulmar and the newly restored Grumman Martlet. In addition to the aircraft on display there is a representation of a German U-boat conning tower along with a rare example of a German Gyrocopter. Gyrocopters were stored onboard the U-boats within torpedo tubes. They could be deployed rapidly when the submarine surfaced and towed behind the submarine lifting its pilot to height of some 100 metres, extending visibility to around 25miles.

The exhibition was opened at on July 11 by former First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band who is Chairman of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, Admiral Terry Loughran, Chairman of the Fleet Air Arm Museum and Capt Eric Brown CBE who as a Martlet pilot, took part in the Battle of the Atlantic.

WHERE: RNAS Yeovilton Somerset, BA22 8HT
OPENING TIMES: 10am - 5:30pm
CONTACT: 01935 840 565

MUSEUM GUIDE

Aussies on Horseback

The Australian Light Horse became a legend. **Neil Dearberg** revisits the First World War campaign that made them a household name down under.

Nightfall on 31 October 1917 and 800 Australian horsemen handed General Allenby the keys to Gaza, obstinate gateway to Palestine.

That afternoon sparks exploded from flints as over 3,000 hooves of Australian 'Waler' horses thundered across three miles of open rocky ground. Turkish aircraft rained bombs among them while artillery, machine-gun, and rifle fire flew overhead, range unadjusted.

Bayonets imitating swords flashed as elongated shadows of horses and riders cannoned across that plain and the sun collapsed into the horizon. Waler nostrils flared below bulging eyes as they sniffed water, denied them for 36 hours; they wanted that water, and bent-low riders hung on, screaming obscenities.

Horses and riders had never before charged like this into battle. They were not cavalry. The Turks had expected them to dismount and assault as infantry. That was what 'light horse' were supposed to do. Only not today.

The last great mounted charge

The leading horses bounded over unprotected trenches, galloping straight into town. Following horsemen leapt the trenches, vaulted from saddles, and drove bayonets into the nearest enemy. The Turks shot back. There were more casualties from hand-to-hand fighting than the ride through shot and shell, but just 32 dead in total out of 800 (including Test cricketer 'Tibby' Cotter).

Beersheba was in British hands, as 1,200 astounded Turks surrendered to these crazed Australian horsemen, its water captured, and the Gaza gateway unlocked.

The charge brought to a climax an all-day battle in which the infantry had been checked. The town and its water had

> Horsemen leapt the trenches, vaulted from saddles, and drove bayonets into the nearest enemy.

Photos: © WIPL

to be taken by nightfall – or withdrawal would have been inevitable. Desperate, at 4.30pm the Australian commander had ordered 4th Brigade Australian Light Horse (ALH), commanded by Brigadier William Grant, to charge all the way. They did, and they won.

This goes down in history as the last great mounted charge. It was the finest hour of the Australian Light Horse, one re-enacted for film and photos. So who were they?

Outback and horseback

Australia was a decade-old nation Australia was a decade-old nation, formed from its colonies, untested in battle; a harsh land of arid, wild, untested in battle, a harsh land of arid, wild bush and outback that required tough outdoor men and an egalitarian lifestyle. A volunteer force, around 85% of Lighthorsemen were from the bush and the country towns. Their forefathers had descended from the cities, towns, villages, and green fields of England with centuries of tradition and class culture. These Australians, by contrast, displayed a brash independence and a natural audacity.

Most were riding and shooting before they went to school. They would live outdoors for weeks, observing, hunting, using their initiative, working alone, working in teams, roughing it in heat, cold, rain, flood, bushfire, or snow, and getting the job done. In the frontier of Australia, mateship and a man's toughness meant survive or perish. Their upbringing suited them to an open, fast style of warfare that Palestine delivered.

But they did not like authority. The infamous 'Battle of the Wassa' erupted in Cairo's red-light district in early April 1915, just before Gallipoli. Youthful exuberance, away from home for the first time, got them the clap. They reckoned they had been overcharged and badly serviced. Fuelled up with beers and mate-driven courage, demolition of brothels was today's action. Even intervention by the despised military police could not prevent smouldering ruins. Between battles, drunkenness and VD became serious issues throughout this campaign.

Australian soldiers have always been notable for their turned-up 'slouch' hats. The Lighthorsemen were more notable as only they sported an emu 'plume' in their hats, seen in many photos; they proudly wore them strutting the streets of Cairo or charging the Turks.

General Murray, commander-in-chief of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF), knew their fighting qualities, knew they were his best troops, and (wisely) overlooked their insolence to authority. Murray described them as 'the keystone of the defence of Egypt'.

Mounted riflemen

The ALH commander was Harry Chauvel, raised in a saddle with a rifle in his arms. A brigade then divisional commander at Gallipoli, in January 1916 he was appointed by Murray to command the Anzac Mounted Division (AMD), then made up of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd ALH Brigades and the New Zealand Mounted Rifle (NZMR) Brigade.

In July 1917 he was promoted lieutenant-general by Allenby (Murray's replacement) to command the Desert Mounted Corps, comprising the Australian and Anzac Mounted Divisions and British Yeomanry – the first Australian promoted to that rank, the first to command a corps, and the first non-British officer to command British formations. Knighted twice in the field and revered by the Lighthorsemen he commanded from beginning to end, he was effectively Allenby's second-in-command during the final great ride.

They had been deprived of their horses and forced to fight as infantry in Gallipoli. Now they were back, mounted on acclimatised and trained horses, ready ▷

Above An Australian Light Horse scout. The ALH was a volunteer force recruited from among the tough outdoor men of the Australian outback. Egalitarian, self-reliant, and intolerant of military 'bull', they became an elite formation with a reputation for both hard fighting and insubordination.

Left A painting by Septimius Power depicting the Australian Light Horse on campaign in Palestine during the First World War.

Below A group of ALH troopers pictured in Cairo. Their off-duty behaviour was often riotous.

Above Lieutenant-General Sir Harry Chauvel (1865-1945), commander of the Anzac Mounted Division, later the Desert Mounted Corps. An exceptionally able general, Chauvel ruled his men with firm but tolerant discipline. They rewarded him with affection and loyalty.

In the frontier of Australia, mateship and a man's toughness meant survive or perish.

to be Lighthorsemen again.

Neither cavalry nor mounted infantry, Lighthorsemen were mounted riflemen, 'adept at scouting and screening, or any operation where speed and flexibility, rather than firepower, were essential'. They rode to battle, dismounted, and advanced like infantry. Their mobility gave them the ability to inject or extract with speed and surprise; rifle or bayonet would then do for the killing.

Their basic unit was a section of four good mates. Integral were field ambulance, veterinary section, machine-gun squadron, signal troop, stores train, and artillery.

Their Waler horses, many brought from Australia by their owner/riders so as to guarantee a good horse, were life itself – and a form of mateship. Walers were strong stock horses used in rural Australia. They were intended to carry 280lb and required six gallons of water a day; on operations they would often carry up to 500lb and go without water for 48-60 hours. 'Bill the Bastard', an exceptionally unruly horse, once accepted five wounded troopers and carried them to safety. Walers were the backbone of the ALH and its success.

Chauvel insisted on – and his troops responded to – firm discipline, extensive training, proper dress and bearing, attention to detail, welfare of man and animal, and observance of the highest standards (in the field).

Sinai

The ALH desert ordeals opened in April 1916. General Murray had to prevent a Turkish assault on the Suez Canal. He knew the limitations of his inexperienced Territorial troops. 'Give it to the Australians. They are the best prepared and most capable troops I have.'

Murray thus committed the 3rd ALH Brigade, commanded by Brigadier J M Antill, to an attack on Jifjafa, so as to make the central route across the Sinai Desert unusable to the Turks. Antill tasked the 9th ALH Regiment, under temporary command of the experienced Major William Scott.

Scott assembled a bizarre multi-national force of mixed religions, cultures, languages, and training to conduct the operation: his ALH Squadron, its field ambulance, a British engineer detachment for destruction of wells, a British signal troop for liaison with the RFC, Egyptian Camel Transport Corps (CTC), Indian Bikaneer Camel Troop escorts, and additional ALH trooper escorts, guides, and interpreters. There were 18 officers, 303 other ranks, 175 horses, 261 camels, and, in support if needed, 10th ALH Regiment at Serapeum and 14th Squadron RFC.

This was the first ALH operation. National pride was at stake. The instructions given to Major Scott were: 'Verify reports of a Turkish force around Jifjafa of approx 40 men, destroy water wells, report other water along the route, capture enemy personnel, identify other works and defences in the area.'

Scott's mood would have dulled when Intelligence reported over 1,200 Turks in various posts within an hour or two's march.

Planning, logistics, and leadership were crucial to this operation. Scott had to water his men and animals during the 130-mile round-trip through 120°F heat and oozing sand. He had to manage the wheeled transport of the ambulance,

Below C Squadron, 12th Australian Light Horse, on campaign.

cope with a blitzkrieg of flies, deal with a normally lethargic bunch of Egyptian labourers, and co-ordinate the ethnic mix. The camels could not carry enough water for the round-trip. The only known wells *en route* were 20 miles south-west of Jifjafa: to be secured.

The Jifjafa mission

Scott's force split into two groups. The first, the slow-moving ambulance, CTC, and escorts, crawled into the dust just after last light on 10 April. The mounted column took off after lunch next day towards a rendezvous of the two groups around midnight; dark brought some relief from the heat and flies.

The next night a base was established on a plateau 12 miles from Jifjafa, where the CTC remained with its Bikaneer and ALH escorts, the wireless detachment, and the ambulance, all under command of Captain B Ragless.

The attackers rode on through the night to avoid the furnace and flies and shock the Turks. Taking seven-and-a-half hours to traverse 12 miles, the horses and camels shuffled through boulder-strewn wadi beds onto a plateau formed of stones sized from cricket- to basketballs. The guides earned their pay that night.

At 9am on 13 April, Australia's Sinai/Palestine campaign opened with total surprise. Two hours later, with one dead Lighthorseman (Corporal Monaghan) their only casualty, they had killed six enemies and captured 34, including an Austrian engineer officer.

Critically, they captured two documents from the Austrian. One stated that the German 300th Squadron with 14 Rampler aircraft, superior in speed and firepower to current British aircraft, would soon arrive in Beersheba, from where they could hinder Sinai operations. The second was a Turkish report of the known water resources in the Sinai desert, plus Turkish progress on drilling and extraction. It marked where water was available in quantities for mounted formations and proved invaluable for operational planning in the coming Sinai campaign.

The dead were buried, wounded treated, prisoners and documents secured, wells destroyed, useful equipment packed up and the unwanted destroyed.

The homeward journey was joy and

Above Plan of the Battle of Romani, 4 August 1916.

excitement: central route closed! Major Scott and his Lighthorsemen had justified Murray's confidence.

The Romani position

The northern route across the desert was another matter. Murray had tasked the mission to 5th Yeomanry Brigade, commanded by Brigadier E A Wiggins, under sector commander Major-General The Honourable H A Lawrence. With Lawrence's agreement, Wiggins had cast his squadrons and attached dismounted troops to the desert around Romani like the wind scatters paper. The brigade, except Wiggins and his HQ, was annihilated piece by piece on the morning of 23 April. ▷

Right An ALH column passing through Bethlehem. Despite their rugged outback origins, many Lighthorsemen were religious and had a deep sense of the significance of the region in which they were operating.

AUSTRALIAN LIGHT HORSE

Abov 6th Australian light-horse regiment leaving Jerusalem for demobilisation camp, 12 October 1918.

On Murray's orders, the 2nd ALH Brigade, commanded by Brigadier 'Bull' Ryrie, moved up from Kantara near the Canal on 22 April to support 5th Yeomanry. After an all-night march they arrived to bury the dead and drive off the looting Bedouin.

Chauvel was immediately appointed by Murray to command the Romani/Katia area, and his AMD was redeployed accordingly. Murray planned to advance 90 miles across Sinai to the edge of Palestine. Romani/Katia was a well-watered area 30 miles east of the Canal essential to this advance. A railway and pipeline were being built all the way from Egypt to provide logistical support. The necessity was both to block the route against the Turks and to hold the position as a way-station to Palestine. This was now the mission of the AMD.

Chauvel concentrated his force around Romani, rejecting the scatterings of Wiggins/Lawrence. Extensive long-range patrolling and reconnaissance in force began. He assembled a staff of competent Australian and New Zealand officers and one Briton; this careful selection ensured all remained with his HQ throughout the war. Attached were British and Scottish artillery that integrated so well they became fixtures and, unsuccessfully, applied to wear the Light Horse emu plume.

ALH defences were set up around Romani, while the British 52nd Infantry Division established the northern flank, creating an impenetrable barrier. Chauvel and his staff conducted personal reconnaissance into the desert. Additional Yeomanry and the 42nd Infantry Division remained under the command of Lawrence, stationary in Kantara: a grave error by Murray.

The Turkish attack

Preparations continued until August, when around 18,000 Turks were on the way with artillery, machine-guns, and aircraft, commanded by the veteran and credited German General Kress von Kressenstein.

Chauvel's appreciation, discussed with Murray and Lawrence, concluded the Turks would by-pass the 52nd and attack the dispersed but very mobile ALH. Kress's battle-plan obediently followed Chauvel's notes – except, on the night of 3 August, he attacked in greater force than anticipated when his main body followed a returning ALH patrol into their camp in the dark, creating initial mayhem.

Chauvel rode from brigade to brigade to observe and control first-hand the unfolding battle. Lawrence, on the other hand, remained incommunicado in Kantara once lines were cut, rendering himself useless and ensuring that the infantry and yeomanry he held under his direct command in reserve could not assist the defence of Romani.

The Turks brought up reserves and forced the Lighthorsemen back – so far that the cooks fed them at railhead in camp. The fighting was fierce and at times bayonet-to-belly. Chauvel deliberately pulled his troops back into prepared positions, where his reserves were poised, dragging the Turks across the waterless, heated sands.

Battles went on through the daytime heat into the dark of night for three days.

Finally, waterless, without food, stranded in the hot sands, the Turks were done.

Neither man nor horse rested, whether fighting, watering the horses, dodging Turkish artillery, or moving to new positions. Some slept in their saddles and many horses went unwatered for up to 60 hours. It took extreme stamina and mental courage from each trooper and his horse. But it was worse for 'Johnny Turk' with his extended logistics line.

Finally, waterless, without food, stranded in the hot sands, the Turks were done. Then, having drawn them into the trap, Chauvel's reserves pounced. The Turkish retreat towards their own well-prepared positions succeeded in evading the assaults of the exhausted ALH. The absence of Lawrence's infantry and yeomanry deprived the pursuit of the punch needed for complete victory. Kress got his men back to El Arish.

Romani had been won by the ALH and Chauvel's leadership. Chauvel visited each brigade, and addressed and congratulated the men, soldier to soldiers. The War Office acknowledged the ALH's leadership, skill, and courage.

Of the 1,130 casualties (202 dead), 900 were from the AMD. The Turks lost 1,250 dead and 4,000 prisoners, while EEF staff estimated their total casualties at 9,000. But strategic success is not measured in casualties or captures alone. Romani was the first notable British victory of the Sinai/Palestine campaign, wresting the initiative from the enemy and clearing the way for continual advances into Sinai and Palestine.

Disease

Chauvel initiated health measures with the AMD medical staff. Eradication of fly (and related diseases) became a competition between units as they even 'de-flyed' personnel, animals, and stores entering their areas. Animal management by the ALH vets controlled the fleas, mange, sores, battle injuries, and food quality.

The AMD became the healthiest and best prepared of Murray's army, and continued so under Allenby, his replacement. This would later prove life-saving in the harrowing summer months of 1918 in the Jordan Valley prior to the final offensive of the war.

Water was needed in quantity for man and animal on patrol. The pre-ALH method was to dig a well and quickly reinforce with timber and corrugated iron before the sand fell in. Lieutenant-Colonel Wilson of the 5th ALH Regiment brought in the 'spearpoint pump' used in outback Queensland – a 2.5in pipe sunk into the sand to extract water to 20ft depth. EEF staff would not provide them, so ALH units bought pumps from unit funds until eventually the benefits got through to staffers.

The ALH was equally innovative in medical services. Stretcher-bearers of an ALH Field Ambulance were mounted, unlike their Yeomanry counterparts. They could 'keep up' with the combatants and tend them speedily, evacuating on self-made horse-drawn sand carts, rather than the torturous camel cacolets offered by EEF staff. Regrettably for the wounded, there were insufficient sand carts, as unit funds had to cough-up because EEF staffers 'hadn't used them before'; many died unnecessarily from the pounding of the cacolets.

Forging a legend

For two-and-a-half years, from Romani, through Gaza, and on to the final push to Damascus and Aleppo, the Australian Light Horse were a military elite always in the forefront of the fighting. Even after the Armistice, they remained. Battles over, hundreds died of disease. More died protecting British interests in the Egyptian uprising of 1919. Many survivors did not get home until September 1919.

From Murray's time, when they were the Anzac Mounted Division, to Allenby's, when they became the Desert Mounted Corps,

Above Australian light horsemen riding waler horses.

from Suez to Damascus via Jerusalem, the brash and audacious horsemen were the vanguard of every advance. Wherever they went, these 'insolent colonials' carried the same qualities that continue to be admired in today's 'diggers'.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Neil Dearberg was an officer in the Australian Regular Army for 12 years and Army Reserve for 15 years. He operated his own financial planning business for 23 years, selling that to research the Australian involvement in the Sinai/Palestine campaign, about which he is writing a book and developing a website *www.desertanzacs.com.au*. He is an active conflict archaeologist, working in theatres where the Sinai/Palestine campaign was fought, and has published a variety of related articles in the UK, USA, and Australia.

Further information

Colonel E G Keogh, *Suez to Aleppo* (Directorate of Military Training, 1956);
A J Hill, *Chauvel of the Light Horse: a biography of General Sir Harry Chauvel* (Melbourne University Press, 1978);
The Lighthorsemen (film directed by Simon Winger).

The Western Front Association

founded 1980

the Great War 1914-18: understood

The war in Palestine is regarded as a "sideshow" to the Western Front. And it was a war of movement and cavalry actions that could not occur in France and Flanders. It was instrumental in the final defeat of Turkey. But discussion continues to this day about the Palestinian campaign and if it contributed to shortening the First World War.

The Great War is a fascinating subject, with a complex blend of military, social, science, political and economic history. To understand more about the 1914-18 period, and to appreciate the contexts in which the war in the Middle East was fought, **join us at The Western Front Association**.

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SEPTEMBER 2013

OnManoeuvres

LISTINGS MUSEUM WAR ZONE

DATES TO REMEMBER THIS SEPTEMBER

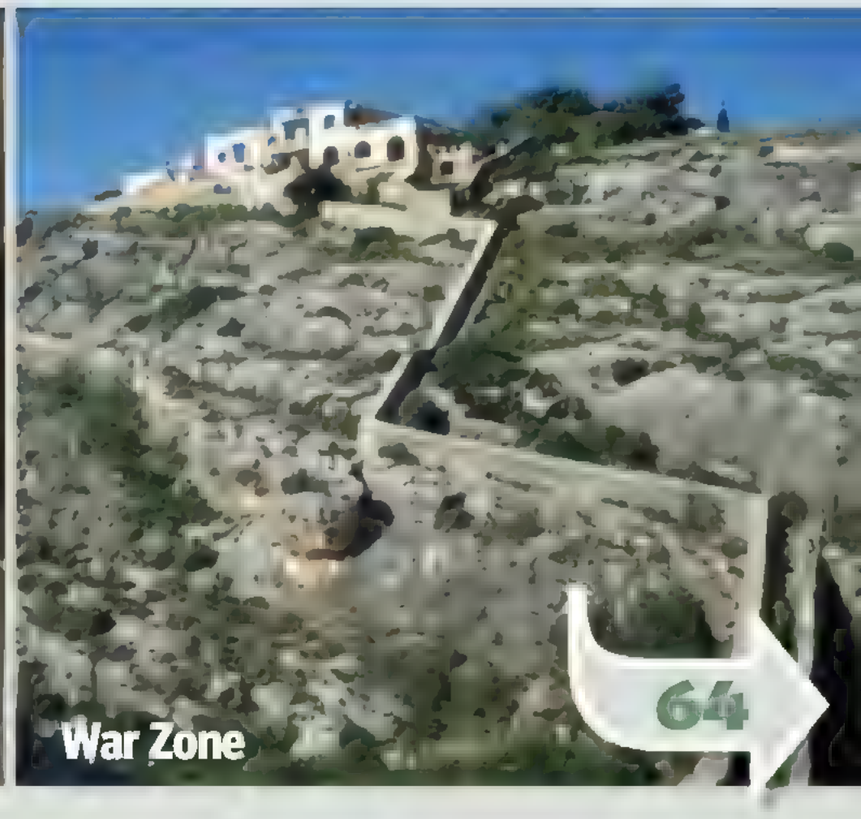
September The Largs Viking Festival tops the bill of this month's events, marking the 750th anniversary of the Battle of Largs, the last Viking invasion of the UK. King's College London's Waterloo conference comes a close second, as renowned historians gather to discuss the impact of Wellington's victory on the 19th century.

Richard Lucas visits the French Foreign Legion Museum in Aubagne, the home of the Legion since 1962. The museum explores the Legion's history and gives insight into the life of a Legionnaire.

For our War Zone, Stephen Miles visits the impressive British defensive works in Malta, originally fortified by the Knights Hospitaller.

Listings 60

Museum 62


War Zone 64

DATES TO REMEMBER

HISTORY FESTIVAL

VIKING INVASION

The Largs Festival takes place every year and draws crowds from near and far to celebrate Viking heritage in the town. The festival focuses on the 1263 Battle of Largs, the last Viking invasion in the UK, which led to the Treaty of Perth in 1266 when Norway ceded all claims to the Western Isles. This year's festival marks the 750th anniversary of that battle.

Largs Viking Festival
31 August-8 September
The Town of Largs

www.largsviking festival.com

£5 ENTRY

CONFERENCE

Waterloo world

Victor Hugo said that Waterloo was not just a battle but that it was the change of front of the part of the universe! It is this theme that is being adopted by a conference organised by King's College, London and Waterloo 200 this September.The conference looks critically at the outcomes of Waterloo in political, social, and cultural terms.

Waterloo: the battle that forged a century
11-12 September

King's College London
Stamford Street
London SE1 8WA

£75 FOR BOTH DAYS

020 7836 5454
www.waterloo200.org

FAMILY EVENT

£6 ENTRY

EVENT

Spitfire celebration

For your chance to sit in and start up a Spitfire, don't miss this living history show. Also on display will be a Hawker Hurricane, a Vickers gun bus, plus a number of re-enactors and military vehicles. Music from the 1940s will be the soundtrack throughout the event, and there will be trade stands and plenty of bars and food stalls.

The 3rd Battle of Britain Living History Show
31 August 1 September

WRSA Fields
Norton Fitzwarren
Taunton TA4 1BH

£8 ENTRY

gadlam@btinternet.com
spitfirespares.co.uk

LECTURE

Femme fatale

Christine Granville was one of Britain's most daring and highly decorated female special agents, and reputedly Churchill's favourite spy. A glamorous and courageous heroine, Christine skied into occupied Poland, served in Egypt, and was parachuted behind enemy lines in France.

In this talk, author Clare Mulley will pay tribute to this charismatic woman whose quick wit saved the lives of many, but whose own life was cut short at the hands of an obsessed former colleague.

The Spy Who Loved
17 September

Churchill War Rooms
King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AQ

£17 ENTRY

020 7930 6961
www.iwm.org.uk

FAMILY EVENT

HMS *Belfast* bound

From bananas in Borneo to a 21-gun salute in San Francisco harbour, venerable warship HMS *Belfast* encountered many countries and cultures as she sailed across the globe on active duty.

Explore some of her journeys, hearing stories from across the world map, and handle some of the objects that helped the ship and her sailors during their extensive travels.

Points on a Compass
7 September

HMS *Belfast*
The Queen's Walk
London
SE1 2JH

020 7940 6300
www.iwm.org.uk

FREE ENTRY

LECTURE

Washington in flames

In August 1814 the United States army is defeated in battle by an invading force just outside Washington, D.C. The US president and his wife have just enough time to pack their belongings and escape from the White House before the invaders enter. After tucking into the deserted presidential dinner, they then set fire to the place.

Drawing on a wealth of material, Peter Snow recounts the fast-changing fortunes of both sides of this extraordinary confrontation.

When Britain Burned the White House: the 1814 invasion of Washington
19 September

National Army Museum
Royal Hospital Road
London SW3 4HT

£10 ENTRY

020 7881 6600
www.nam.ac.uk

FILM SCREENING

IWM Contemporary launches with the London première of Omer Fast's film *5,000 Feet is the Best*, which is a challenging exploration of the nature of contemporary conflict.

Fast's 30-minute film takes its name from the optimum operational flight altitude of a US Air Force Predator drone. Based on a series of interviews conducted with a former drone operator in a Las Vegas hotel room, the film is a fascinating contribution to the ongoing debate about the deployment of drones.

FREE ENTRY

HISTORY FESTIVAL

Gloucester's past

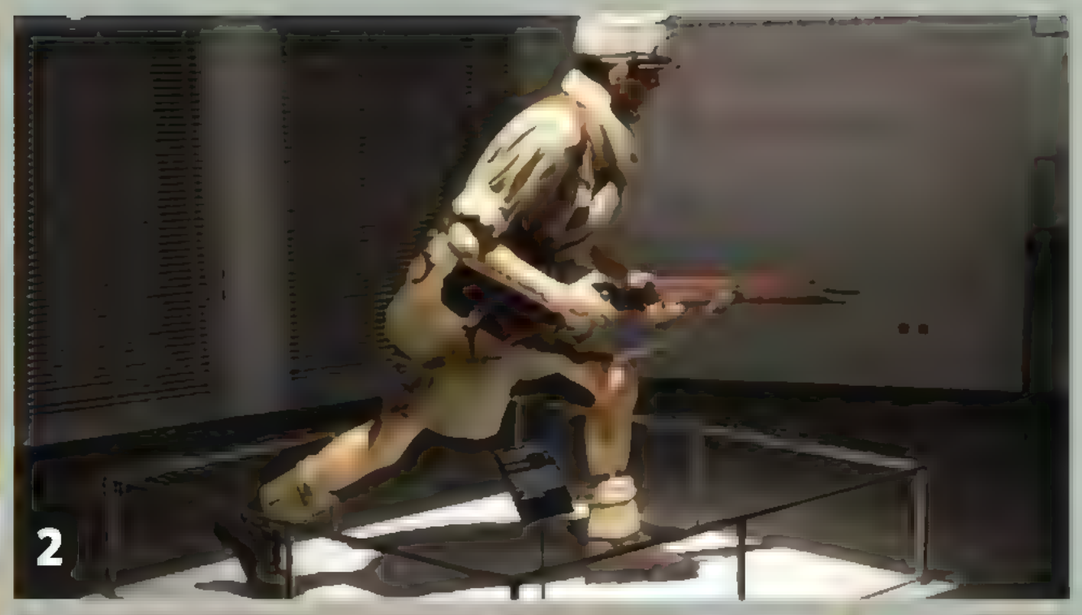
The Gloucester History Festival is a week-long celebration of everything historic in Gloucester. From the Gloucester parade to a BBC-sponsored Living History event launching the brand-new City Museum, talks and tours of the city, family craft activities and access into Gloucester's hidden historic treasures, there will be something for everyone to enjoy.

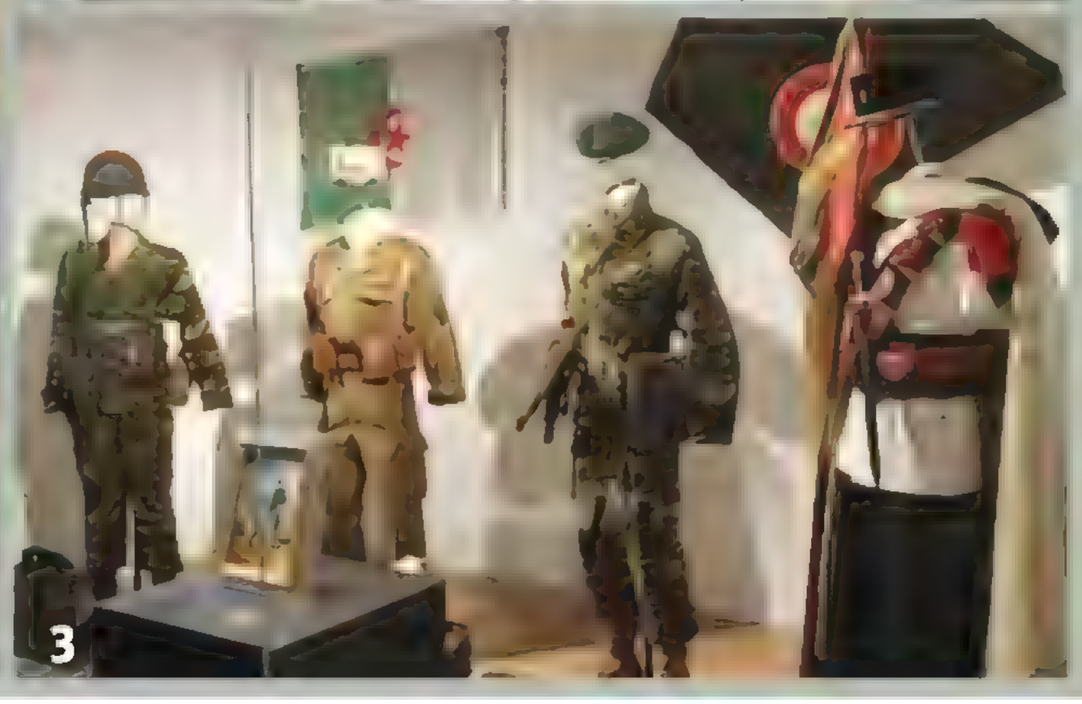
Gloucester History Festival
3-11 September

Gloucester Cathedral
12 College Green
Gloucester GL1 2LX

FREE ENTRY

01452 528095
gloucesterhistoryfestival.co.uk





The French Foreign Legion Museum

Richard Lucas visits the Musée de la Légion étrangère in the south of France.

In 1888 the French Foreign Legion was authorised to create a 'Hall of Honour' – a place where trophies and souvenirs of past campaigns could be presented. A building was erected in the Legion's original home of Sidi Bel Abbes, Algeria. After Algerian independence in 1962, the Legion's HQ was transferred to Aubagne in the south of France. The contents of the 'Hall of Honour' were housed in an edifice at the end of the 'sacred way' behind an impressive 'Monument to the Dead', also brought back from Algeria.

Expansion and modernisation

In 2005 a project to modernise and enlarge the museum began, with work starting in 2010. The museum was officially inaugurated during the festivities of Camerone Day 2013, marking the 150th anniversary of an epic battle in which 65 Legionnaires faced off against a far superior force of over 2,000 Mexican troops. Camerone Day is universally a Day of Remembrance for all Legionnaires.

Originally 800m², the museum now covers a single ground-floor of 1,200m². You enter into a room presenting the cultural impact of the Legion in film, literature, and song. To the left are temporary exhibitions, currently *'La Légion dans la Peau'* – a photography exhibition of Legionnaires and their tattoos. This will be followed by 'The Legion and the Mediterranean', an exhibition of paintings of Legionnaires.

The *Parcours de Combatant*

The permanent collection begins with the origins of the Legion: its creation in 1831 by the French king Louis Philippe, and its early conflicts and postings.

The following ten rooms give a unique view of the history and evolution of the Legion through the uniforms, equipment, and personal items of the Legionnaires. The colonial period is of special interest, as it was in the colonies that the Legion established its reputation for soldiering and building. One display window, from the North African campaigns, traces the development of the famed *képi blanc*, the

PICTURED ON BOTH PAGES:

1. The crypt
2. The weapons and uniform room
3. Evolution of the uniforms
4. WWI era Legionnaire
5. Poster from the room depicting the Legion's cultural impact
6. Monument to the Dead
7. Mounted Legionnaire in white *képi*

Below left WWI era Legionnaire

white dress *képi* still worn with pride by the Legionnaires today. In a small courtyard, a monument originally erected in Annaba, Algeria, to commemorate the completion of a major public-works project carried out by the Legion has been re-erected as a dedication to the Legion engineers.

The Legion's time in Indochina and the Far East is marked by the tropical uniforms and relics acquired during the jungle campaigns. There are statues, vases, and artefacts from the East, as well as oriental weapons, some of which may have actually been used by the Legionnaires themselves.

The following rooms present the Legion's role in the major conflicts including WWI, when they wore greatcoats, used trench knives and long bayonets, and carried the necessary gas-masks. During WWII the Legion made up a large part of the French Free Forces, and were armed with the American Thompson submachine-gun, the Garand rifle, and the M1 carbine.

We then find ourselves among memorabilia of the Algerian conflict, with the famous French 'lizard' camouflage uniform on display. The more recent war in Afghanistan is typified by the detailed display of one of the deadly IEDs, the homemade road-side bombs which have been responsible for over 60% of coalition troop casualties.

A Legionnaire's life

Closing the exhibition, one room shows the more personal side of the Legionnaire, with paintings, writings, and personal effects. Another room is dedicated to the 'Pioneers' of the Legion – the builders who were responsible for the development of the infrastructure, roads and bridges, in the colonies. The Pioneers, with their beards, leather aprons, and axes still lead the Legion on the parade-ground.

Passing from here, the visitor can see the impressive 'Monument to the Dead', with its four statues of Legionnaires from different eras, and the globe on top symbolising the Legion's overseas role and the many conflicts in which it was engaged both in France and on foreign soil.

The visit ends in the 'Hall of Honour', where Legionnaires officially sign their enlistment papers and where they are officially discharged. From the Hall of Honour the visitor can view the 'Crypt', a sacred place which holds the Legion's most esteemed relic: the wooden hand of Captain Danjou, hero of Camerone.

A visit to the Legion Museum is not just interesting, but allows outsiders to visit the heart of the French Foreign Legion. As much as for the general public, the museum is for the Legionnaires. At the inauguration, General Christophe de Saint Chamas, Commander of the French Foreign Legion, summed this up:

The Foreign Legion is both myth and reality. Founded in 1831, the Legion is unique…

But more than just an institution, what makes the Legion is its men, the Legionnaires, coming from all social classes, from all countries. It is they who remain the focal point of this project. The myth of the Legionnaire and the French Foreign Legion has been an inspiration in literature, in the cinema, and in an inexhaustible body of stories, songs, poems, novels, and screenplays. The new Museum of the Legion is designed to reconcile the myth and the reality, to allow the visitor to enter the secret and very real world of the French Legionnaire.

A Legionnaire's life begins here at the museum. It is here at the museum that his service will end. It is in the Hall of Honour of the museum that the Legionnaire receives his first contract. It is through a visit to the museum that he confirms his initial enlistment before joining his regiment. Finally, it is here at the museum where he is presented a certificate of honorable discharge when he leaves the ranks of the French Foreign Legion. This museum strengthens the identity of these 'men without a name'.

If you're in the Provence region, Aubagne lies about 40km south-east of Aix en Provence, and 20km east of Marseille. Exit Aubagne Centre, follow the signs for *'Légion étrangère'*. If you pass the main entrance to the Camp, on the Route de la Légion, you can be guided to the museum, which is on the GPS Chemin de la Thuillière, Aubagne.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The museum is open 10am-noon, 2-4pm Wed-Sun. Closed 23 Dec-31 Jan. Group tours in several languages available by appointment in advance.

FREE ENTRY

04.42.18.12.41
musee.legionetrangere@gmail.com

Malta's Victoria Lines

Stephen Miles explores British fortifications erected in preparation for a war that never happened.

Above A view of the Victoria Lines crossing the Bingemma Gap.

On 5 September 1800, French forces surrendered Malta to the British, marking the beginning of 164 years of colonial rule. For centuries the island had commanded an important strategic position in the Mediterranean, lying midway between the European mainland and North Africa, and sitting astride sea routes running east and west. Anyone wanting to dominate trade and maritime politics in the region could not ignore this rocky outpost of three islands – Malta, Gozo, and Comino – with a combined surface area roughly the same as the Isle of Wight.

As Britain extended its influence into the Mediterranean during the 19th century, this importance came into sharp focus. Of Malta, Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State for War and the Colonies (1812-1827), commented, 'there appears no spot in the south of Europe so well calculated to fix the influence and extend the interests of Great Britain'.

Valletta was regarded as one of the most perfect harbours in the world. Apart from affording a safe anchorage for the largest of fleets, it had enormous storage capacities (its gunpowder magazines were capable of storing 21,000 barrels). Later in the century Malta was an indispensable coaling station for ships travelling to the far corners of Queen Victoria's Empire.

The island's fine climate made it a good centre for medical care and patient recovery. Its hospitals provided the epithet 'Nurse of the Mediterranean', and it played a key role in treating the wounded from the Gallipoli campaign in 1915.

The fortifications of Malta

In 1800, Britain had inherited an impressive range of fortifications, built up principally under the rule of the Knights Hospitaller (1530-1789). The harbours of Valletta were protected by such forts as St Elmo, Ricasoli, St Angelo, St Michael, and Manoel – the so-called 'keys to Malta' – as well as the robust Santa Margherita and Cottonera Lines. Malta, in consequence, has one of the largest concentrations of military works anywhere in the world, and the legacy of this British 'imperial fortress' is an important aspect of tourism on the islands to this day.

Malta has had to withstand three major sieges: against the Turks at the time of the Knights Hospitaller (1565), against the British who were trying to dislodge French forces (1798-1800), and against first Italian then German air bombardments during WWII (1940-1942).

By the mid 19th century, however, the suitability of the fortifications inherited by the British in the event of further attack was called into question. France's new shell-firing guns, developed in 1837, and their long-range rifled muzzle-loading (RML) cannon, which appeared in 1842, were cause for concern. At a stroke Britain's entire stock of wooden ships became highly vulnerable.

The French increased their lead by introducing the first iron-clad warship in 1858, accelerating a technological arms race. The British countered by commencing work on HMS *Warrior*, a warship constructed entirely of iron, in 1859. This had profound implications for land-based fortifications.

Right Fortifications on Malta and the Victoria Lines
Below right The Victoria Lines dominated the northern part of the island.

Admiral Nelson's wise advice against 'laying wood before walls' was now turned on its head. If a navy could lay iron before walls using long-range explosive shells instead of the old short-range solid round shot, then existing defensive structures would soon become obsolete. At the same time a related threat was developing from the growing technology of steam-powered ships, which could transport infantry units quickly to different parts of a coastal battle zone. The danger to the northern and western coast of Malta, and from a surprise overland attack on Valletta, was clear.

The need for stronger fortifications

In 1859 a report on the state of the Fortress of Malta was issued by the War Office, highlighting the need for new and strengthened fortifications in the harbour area. In addition there was a recommendation for 'continuous lines of advanced works' to combat a ground offensive. In 1860 these were subsumed into the work of a Royal Commission, which recommended the improvement of home defences to combat an anticipated invasion from France.

In the 1860s some 76 works of various sizes were built in Britain. These were never used in active defence and were soon nicknamed 'Palmerston's Follies' (after Lord Palmerston, British Prime Minister, 1859-1865). There was a firm belief in government circles that an attack on Britain's Mediterranean possessions would be a prelude to an attack on the country itself. For this reason, Palmerston's defence improvements were rolled out into the 'British Lake'. On Malta a number of new forts were constructed at Sliema (1872), St Rocco (1873), St Lucian (1874), Pembroke (1875), St Leonardo (1875), Delimara (1876), and Tas-Silġ (1879).

The importance of refortifying Malta was greatly increased with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. This made the island a military base not just in a Mediterranean context, but also in its relation to Britain's overseas empire in Asia. The acquisition of Egypt by Britain in 1882 further added to the strategic importance of the island. ▷

The unification of Italy in 1861 created a new European power, and a new threat to Britain's Mediterranean interests. An Italian navy (*Regia Marina Italiana*) was soon founded. Although its reputation suffered a blow with its ignominious defeat by the Austrians at Lissa in July 1866, increased commitment and expenditure in the 1870s soon made it the third largest among the world's navies. This was demonstrated by the laying down of two new ships in 1873 – the *Duilio* and *Dandolo* – which, when completed, were armed with four 450mm RMLs, the largest guns then in existence.

These behemoths each weighed 100 tonnes and could fire one 864kg projectile every 15 minutes up to eight miles. To counter this threat, new batteries were built at Cambridge (1878) and Rinella (1879) with identical monster guns. The one at Rinella is a major tourist attraction today; here, the 'world's largest cannon' is fired once a year.

The threat to Malta in the event of a belligerent Italy was now very real, and this was compounded politically by continuing pro-Italian sentiment among the Maltese population. This played itself out in often acrimonious conflict over culture and language between Italophile and Anglophile Maltese, and the imperial p ower remained edgy about the sympathies of the island's Latin population.

What was unsettling for Britain at this time was Italy's belief that she could not become a 'real' nation without a successful war. This was crystallised in the comments of the Marquis Alessandro Guicciolo in 1882: 'A new nation can only be properly consecrated with a baptism of blood.' Between 1862 and 1913 Italy spent 25% of its state expenditure on the army and navy. A further concern was the revival of the old Roman concept of *Mare Nostrum* ('Our Sea'), and the nascent idea of an Italian empire.

Below Victoria Lines near Fomm ir-Rih Bay showing the ridge of the Great Fault (looking east).

The Victoria Lines

The threat of a combined sea bombardment and land invasion of Malta led Britain to consider extending the line of fortifications away from the harbour area. An additional consideration was the growth of suburbs in Valletta which were now lying outside the protective canopy of these forts. In 1875 work began on fortifying the long limestone ridge known as the Great Fault (running from Fomm ir-Rih Bay in the west to Baħar iċ-Ċagħaq in the east). The result came to be known as 'the Victoria Lines' in commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1897.

The defensive properties of the ridge had attracted the attention of the Knights Hospitaller, who had built rudimentary fortifications around Naxxar in the early 18th century. There is evidence, however, that the ridge was fortified as early as the 16th century, and a Bronze Age citadel occupied the site of Fort Mosta.

The first work to be constructed was a fort at Binġemma to protect the western end of the line, while Fort Madliena, started in 1878, protected the east. In 1880 Fort Mosta was started to cover the centre. From the beginning, the forts were intended to have a dual land/sea defensive role, particularly those on the extremities. When complete, the fortifications extended over a distance of roughly 12km. The entire ensemble was continued over many decades, and a wall was built between the forts, 1.5m in height, with gun loops to provide covered firing positions (completed in 1899).

The Victoria Lines dominated the entire northern area of the island, and cut off the convenient bays of the west.

Several commentators have pointed out how this curiously reverts to the old pre-gunpowder days of solid linear walled fortification designed with shoulder-to-shoulder defence in mind. It does, however, reveal British Army concerns about land-based attack.

Gun batteries and emplacements were added at intervals between the forts, such as the central Targa Battery. There were also entrenchments, stop walls, searchlight emplacements, and howitzer positions. The ridge is interrupted by gorges at Wied il-Għasel, Wied Anġlu, and Wied il-Faħam, through which rivers flow after heavy rainfall. The parapet at the last two is supported by bridge-like structures maintaining the continuity of the defences. Bridges, now disappeared, also existed at the Wied il-Għasel and Wied Filip.

The Victoria Lines, also known as the North-West Front, had many advantages. They dominated the entire northern area of the island of Malta, and, as if by act of providence, the Lines cut off the western part of the island, which had convenient bays and facilities for any landing by a hostile force. The idea was that the cliffs to the south of the island would preclude any landings from that direction, and new forts would plug gaps

on the north and east side. In addition, the best of the island's resources and water, scarce on Malta even to this day, were on the defenders' side of the walls. A less publicised reason for building the Lines where they are was that land at the time was cheaper in the north of the island than nearer to Valletta!

Although formidable in appearance, the Lines did have their limitations. It was soon realised that due to the topography there were parcels of dead ground over which the guns of the forts had no control. Further gun batteries to rectify this problem were proposed, but not all were built.

Another defect was the sharp fall-off of ground at the extremities, particularly in the west, where an enemy could, with stealth, outflank the entire line. Military exercises landing troops at Fomm ir-Rih Bay showed how a force could get to the rear of the fortifications without alerting the defenders. Several suggestions to counter this weakness were put forward, such as making it easier to move field guns into the gap, improving the wall in this area, and constructing blockhouses.

The demise of the Victoria Lines

Malta continued to play a pivotal role in the control of Britain's Mediterranean empire as the threat of war continued. But the danger from Italy turned out to be chimeric. The Italians were more interested in provoking France into war in the late 1880s – a war which did not materialise – and then ended up on the Anglo-French side in the Great War.

In the 1890s enmity developed between Britain and France, mainly over colonial disputes, but this sabre-rattling again came to nothing. No shots were fired in anger over Malta, and the fact that Britain allowed her new ally Italy to use Valletta harbour for her navy in WWI adds a supreme irony to the story of the Victoria Lines.

In 1900 the Victoria Lines were considered too vulnerable after being 'penetrated' in a military exercise. The concept of repelling an invasion force directly from the beaches was now being developed. In 1907 the Lines were abandoned only seven years after completion, having never been used in anger. They were declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1988.

The walk along the whole length of the Victoria Lines is an exhilarating experience and one that really gives you an insight into the strategic necessity of these fortifications. The 30km walk can be done in one go or in two days using the bus service that crosses the Tarġa Gap near Mosta. There is no public transport to the western end of the Lines, but you can start at Mġarr and walk or take a taxi from there. The walk is described in *Walking in Malta* by Paddy Dillon (Cicerone) and at *www.victorialinesmalta.com*

Below View from the Victoria Lines, looking north.

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WHAT IS MODERN CONFLICT ARCHAEOLOGY?

MHM looks at the evolution of archaeological fieldwork and how it will impact on next year's Centenary.

Twentieth-century warfare is a unique cultural phenomenon. While all conflicts in history have produced dramatic shifts in human behaviour, industrialisation gives to modern warfare a particular material and psychological intensity.

Fundamentally, war is the transformation of matter by destruction, giving rise to extremes of behaviour, from the bestiality of close-quarters battle or genocidal killing-fields, to the unbearable sadness of individual loss or extraordinary acts of self-sacrifice and heroism.

Modern industrial societies have an unparalleled capacity to generate technologies of killing and destruction, to embody them in mass-produced *matériel*, and to mobilise vast armies to deploy them. Modern war therefore creates and destroys on a scale that dwarfs all previous conflicts.

The archaeological imprint is correspondingly vast. Battlefields could be entire landscapes of a hundred, even a thousand, square miles. Front-lines extended for hundreds of miles and were often several miles deep. Rear areas were riddled with military camps and store depots, airfields and transport parks, hospitals and POW cages. The Home Front was itself a contested and militarised zone in itself, a centre of war production and mobilisation, and a target of blockade and aerial bombing.

Modern conflict archaeology is an attempt to get to grips with this vast material imprint of recent warfare. It involves studying military landscapes at every scale from the regional 'big picture' to the minutiae of a dugout, a shell-hole, or the bits of a body in a hastily cleared field-grave. It involves a multi-disciplinary interaction between military history, archive research, landscape survey, excavation, the study of artefacts, and the anthropology of the human experience of modern war and its legacies.

The last two decades have seen major advances in our ability to understand modern war as new archaeological and anthropological approaches to its study have come into play. Increasingly, this is reflected in field projects, university courses, academic research, and a stream of publications. And as we approach the centenary of the First World War, the new archaeological sub-discipline of modern conflict archaeology is coming into its own.

Military History Monthly will be reporting fully on First World War archaeology over the next five years. Not least, we will be alerting our readers to the many opportunities now opening up for hands-on engagement by willing volunteers. Historical research is a well-established hobby for the military history buff. Archaeological fieldwork has now become an exciting new option. Watch this space!

Journal of Conflict Archaeology
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SEPTEMBER 2013

MHM Reviews

FILM | BOOKS

September *The Official Dambusters Experience* is the subject of our lead review. Written in collaboration with the RAF Archive, this book contains never-before-published facsimile documents and an excellent array of maps and illustrations. Espionage, Operation Crossbow, and the Hundred Years War are also covered in our book reviews this month.

For the DVD review, *MHM* covers Oliver Stone's *Untold History of the United States*, a ten-episode series exploring key moments in US history, from the reasons behind the Cold War, President Harry Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan, and changes in America's global role since the fall of Communism.

DVD

The Untold History of the United States

FREMANTLE MEDIA INTERNATIONAL
1 JULY 2013, £19.99

'History is a pack of lies agreed upon', Oliver Stone quotes in the intro to his excellently put-together new documentary. Although Stone does not necessarily agree with Napoleon's assertion, he does vow to debunk history's supposed heroes 'not with malice, but by simply re-stating the facts.'

The film's reception has been divided. Applauded by the left and despised by the right, it is an attempt to broaden the one-sided view of American history that people of Stone's generation were supposedly taught at school.

It does this using a combination of archive footage interlinked with feature film footage. Stone narrates the unfolding story of America's involvement in the major conflicts since WWII. The 10-part documentary has been condensed into three discs.

The first begins with America's role during the Second World War, the economic and political reasoning behind it entering, and the nature of its relationship with Britain. In conclusion to this section, Stone makes it clear where he stands. 'Though the myth lives on that the Americans won WWII, serious historians agree that it was the Soviet Union and its entire society, including its brutal dictator Joseph Stalin, who, through sheer desperation and incredibly stoic heroism, forged the narrative of World War Two.'

Next, we are in North Korea where all the major cities are being scorched and destroyed by napalm. Clips from the 1959 film *Pork Chop Hill* show the difficulties encountered at the negotiations during the Korean War. Here, an interesting comparison is made: describing the bombing of the dams in Pyongyang, North Korea, which caused enormous floods and destroyed the rice crop, Stone recalls the Nuremburg Trials, where similar action taken by the Nazis against Holland in 1943 was condemned as a war crime.

Concluding the series, disc three takes us through the years of Reagan, the Clinton administration, to today's war on terror. Clips of drones and peace protests accompany Stone's final speech, and the soundtrack, which is superb throughout the series, is at this point at its most heart-warming. Whether or not you agree with the rather negative view of American history that this documentary offers up, it is hard to deny the exhaustive nature of the work that has gone in to making it.

The series took four years to create and Stone's historical adviser, Peter Kuznick, has had to be extremely thorough in his research. You get the impression that making the film has had a real impact on Stone who claims to have discovered that 'there is power in love. Real power in real love.' He continues, 'The history of man is not only one of blood and death, but also one of honour, achievement, kindness, memory, and civilization.' *GC*

Battle of Dunkirk and Operation Dynamo museum

This museum is located in the fortifications that were built in 1874 to reinforce France's coastal defence. Bastion 32 served as the headquarters for the French and Allied forces during the Battle of Dunkirk and Operation Dynamo.
The Mémorial du Souvenir tells the incredible story of the battle and of the evacuation of more than 338.000 allied soldiers from the « Pocket of Dunkirk ».

In the museum, you will discover a rich exhibition of maps, pictures and both allied and German military material. Scale models of the sites of the operation, uniforms and weapons complete the collection.
A film using dramatic period footage, with a duration of approximately 15 minutes, gives an excellent overall view of the events of May-June 1940.

Visit: 1h to 1h30
2013 Admission prices
Adults: € 4 - Groups: € 3,5 - School groups: € 3

Memorial du Souvenir
Courtines du Bastion 32
Rue des Chantiers de France - 59140 Dunkerque
A16 exit 60 - GPS : 51°2'46.31"N – 2°22'52.25"E
Bookings
Office de Tourisme
Phone: + 33 (0)3 28 26 27 31 - Fax: + 33 (0)3 28 26 27 80
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History

On the 10th May 1940, German army group B invaded Holland, Luxembourg and Belgium. In response, three allied armies were committed to the river Dyle in central Belgium. At the same time, German army group A burst through the Ardennes and advanced very quickly towards the French coast and the English Channel.
By taking Boulogne sur Mer and Calais, the Germans succeeded in surrounding the allied troops in the north - west of France.
Holland capitulated on the 15th May, and Belgium on the 28th. Facing an enemy which was better equipped and which outnumbered the allied troops, retreat was the only option for the French armies and the British Expeditionary Force, that had been withdrawn on the coastline around the province of the « Pocket of Dunkirk ».

15 000 French and British troops defended a narrow perimeter to prevent the Germans from taking Dunkirk. Thanks to the sacrifices of these soldiers, a ragtag fleet of around 1400 mainly British, but also French, Belgian and Dutch ships, succeeded in rescuing more than 338 000 soldiers from the beaches and the eastern mole.
On the 4th June, at dawn, the last ship left Dunkirk and the Germans entered the city that was in ruins. The success of the biggest evacuation in military history, a « Disaster turned to Triumph », gave a great boost to British morale, and is now seen as a major turning point of World War II.

BOOKS

THE OFFICIAL DAMBUSTERS EXPERIENCE

John Sweetman
Carlton, £30
ISBN 978-1780972725

The enduring appeal of the Dambusters Raid lies in its combination of sheer physical courage, aerial skill, and engineering ambition. The two pivotal characters of the operation, Wing Commander Guy Gibson and Barnes Wallis, the engineering genius, have attracted considerable interest from historians and biographers alike.

Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, Bomber Command identified 45 potential targets in the Ruhr valley to be attacked in the event of conflict with Germany. These targets consisted of power and coking plants whose destruction would have significant repercussions for German industrial effectiveness. At the same time, it was noted that strikes on the Möhne and Sorpe dams would also destroy the selected targets, by means of the flooding that would follow their destruction. Further damage would be inflicted on the local economy and transport infrastructure. By 1939, the Air Staff had identified seven dams as potential bombing targets in the Ruhr and Weser valleys.

The difficulty in destroying the German dams lay in developing an effective delivery system for the required explosives. Early plans proved to be disappointing. The interest of Barnes Wallis, Assistant Chief Designer at Vickers-Armstrong, invigorated attempts to find a solution. The result was Wallis' famous concept of the bouncing bomb. Despite early opposition from fellow scientists and RAF officers, Wallis' concept eventually triumphed as an effective method of delivering sufficient explosive power to breach the Ruhr dams.

With the concept in development, the next stage was to assemble the aircrews who would undertake the raid. In March 1943, Bomber Command authorised the creation of Squadron X, which would eventually coalesce as 617 Squadron. Given the seriousness and secrecy of the plan, the highly decorated Guy Gibson was selected to command. Gibson was known for his skill, command authority, and devotion to duty. Over the following weeks, 617 Squadron trained intensively for the raid, although the final test of the bomb was not conducted until early May. The crews concentrated on perfecting low-level flying and identifying relevant landmarks to aid navigation.

The raid was conducted on 16 and 17 May 1943. It involved 19 Lancaster bombers in three bombing waves. The breach of the dams prompted the anticipated flooding, which did indeed destroy factories, disrupt transport infrastructure, and inundate farmland. But loss of life was also significant. Of the 133 RAF servicemen who participated in the raid, 53 lost their lives and another three were taken prisoner.

Of the 133 RAF servicemen who participated in the raid, 53 lost their lives and another three were taken prisoner.

Thirty-four airmen were decorated for their roles in the attack, including Guy Gibson, who won a Victoria Cross. Considerable debate has raged in recent years over the effectiveness of the raid. Albert Speer, the Nazi Minister for Armaments and Munitions, moved swiftly to repair the damage caused by the bombing and resulting flooding. This involved the movement of 7,000 specialist workers to the area, along with 20,000 labourers. It can therefore be convincingly argued that the most significant impact of the raid was the withdrawal of personnel and resources from other projects, which weakened the German war effort.

This book provides a compelling overview of the Dambusters raid from conception to cultural impact after the war. It brings the context and events of the operation to life through the inclusion of copies of relevant documents, including the official map showing the routes to and from the bombing zones. It also includes a copy of Guy Gibson's logbook and the official damage report of the Sorpe Dam.

This book therefore goes far beyond recounting the narrative of the Dambusters raid. It has clear educational value and would be a useful resource in schools and colleges. *The Official Dambusters Experience* is essential reading for anyone with an interest in the wartime actions of 617 Squadron.

In Spies We Trust

Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones
Oxford University Press, £25
ISBN 978-0199580972

One might be tempted to think that the end of the Cold War brought a winding-down of covert intelligence work *à la* John Le Carré. But consider this: since 9/11 there have been exactly two organised terrorist attacks on Western soil perpetrated by Al Qaeda or its cronies – Madrid in 2004 and London in 2007. The fact that only twice in the past 12 years have international terrorist groups managed to hit Western cities (as opposed to Western targets outside Europe and the US) is not due to any lack of initiative.

Take a walk across London's Vauxhall Bridge any hour of night and you will see the lights burning in MI5 headquarters. The same can be said of the CIA nerve centre in Langley. The tactics and targets have changed, but the game is the same. The George Smileys lurking at corner tables with nervous contacts in East Berlin cafés have largely become superannuated, giving way to a phalanx of highly numerate Oxbridge graduates following internet and mobile phone chatter, one hand on a mouse, the other on a Styrofoam cup of coffee.

But what of the 'special intelligence relationship', the tradition of information-sharing between US and British spy agencies which, in the 1940s and 1950s, contributed to national and international security in what was an Anglo-American century? This is the subject Jeffreys-Jones brings to light in his authoritative book, which examines the demise of this special relationship from the 1960s, and its terminal decline following the collapse of the Communist threat to the West and America's hubristic emergence as the world's only superpower.

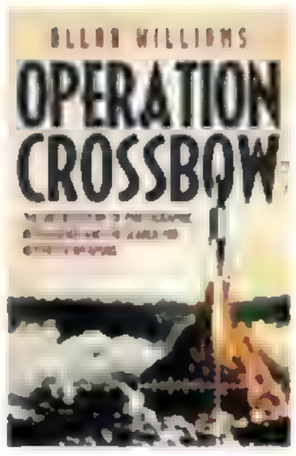
The author argues that when Western intelligence agencies had played their part in hastening the fall of Communism, they became victims of their own success. 'With talk of peace dividends in the air, the intelligence agencies were in line for cuts,' he says. This meant a threat to intelligence liaison. Criticism of the agencies also eroded confidence, an essential ingredient in the trust that enables liaison. The result is implicit in the chapter heading 'The Distant Cousin: America Goes its Own way.' In essence, America would now go it alone, as Washington increasingly began to distance itself from international law, such as when the CIA mined the harbours of Nicaragua, or when the agency began to resort to the kidnap and interrogation under torture of suspected Islamist militants.

Jeffreys-Jones says the UK intelligence community remains convinced that its relationship with the US is still 'special', in the sense that Britain is a privileged partner. Nevertheless, 'In wider American discourse, less and less is heard about the special relationship with Britain.' According to the author, it is still possible for the British to speak of the Americans, in spy parlance, as 'cousins'. But in the light of cold analysis, the whole idea is a 'one-way' concept, with the British doing the Americans' bidding in exchange for erratic titbits of information. 'From the British point of view, assertions to the contrary notwithstanding, the cousin was now a more distant cousin.' If the close reliance on America remained sacrosanct, the author concludes, 'it was at least partly in the presumed absence of an alternative.'

Jules Stewart

Operation Crossbow: the untold story of photographic intelligence and the search for Hitler's V Weapons

Allan Williams
Preface Publishing, £16.99
ISBN 978-1848093072



Allan Williams is curator of the National Collection of Aerial Photography, and a noted authority on the history of aerial photography. In this fascinating book he charts the history of British military aerial photography from the early 1920s to the conclusion of the Second World War. He emphasises the importance of his subject by repeating the prophecy of Generaloberst Werner Freiherr von Fritsch that 'The military organisation with the best aerial reconnaissance will win the next war'. By the end of Williams' account, the validity of this prophecy is beyond doubt.

After the Great War, British interest in aerial photography waned. It became the virtual preserve of a commercial company Aerofilms Ltd, founded in 1919. As far as the British military were concerned, aerial photographic interpretation was the sole responsibility of the Army. In 1938, Aerofilms' successor, the unimaginatively named Aircraft Operating Company, invested the then enormous sum of £5,500 in the purchase of an advanced mechanical plotting machine, complete with powerful stereoscopic optics that enabled 3-D analysis, from the Swiss company Wild Heerbrugg. This machine, known thereafter as the Wild Machine, would play a crucial part in photographic interpretation throughout the forthcoming war.

The outbreak of war quickly saw the Aircraft Operating Company and its Wild Machine absorbed into the RAF, and subsequently located to the Thames Valley at Danesfield House, officially RAF Medmenham. By 1943, nearly 1,800 personnel were employed at Medmenham, including a number of women (among them celebrated photographic interpreter Constance Babington Smith). Early successes included locating the *Bismarck* lurking off the Norwegian coast, and Operation Chastise, the celebrated Dambusters Raid. However, it was the search for Hitler's secret weapons, in effect the V1 and V2 programmes (Operation Crossbow), that was Medmenham's greatest triumph.

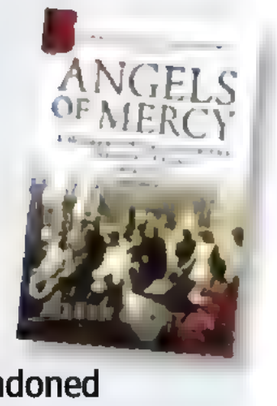
The search was hampered by Churchill's obnoxious chief scientific advisor, Lord Cherwell, stating that because the British could not produce a liquid-fuelled rocket, nor, therefore, could the Germans. Nevertheless, the persistence and hard work of Babington Smith and others was soon rewarded by identifying the primary sites at Peenemunde and Watten.

In the event the V1 (Flying Bomb) assault, which began on 13 June 1944, was something of an anti-climax, prompting the over-optimistic head of the Crossbow Committee, the Right Honourable Duncan Sandys MP, to declare on 7 September, 'the Battle of London is over'.

The very next day, the world's first ballistic missile, the hydrogen peroxide-fuelled V2 rocket, thundered into Staveley Road, Chiswick, London W4, at nearly 3,000 miles per hour. Fortunately, thanks to delays caused by the strategic bombing of V weapons' installations, targeted on information provided by Medmenham, and the rapid advance of the Allied armies into Germany, Hitler's secret weapons proved to be too little, too late. This book comes with excellent maps, and a plethora of apposite photographs. Highly recommended to anyone with an interest in this aspect of modern warfare.

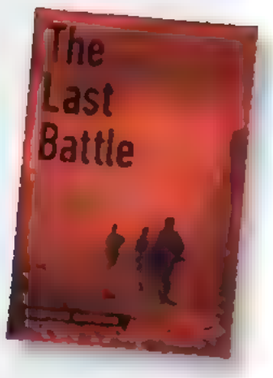
Mark Corby

ON THE HORIZON



Angels of Mercy: a women's hospital on the Western Front 1914-1918

Eileen Crofton
Birlinn Ltd, £9.99
ISBN 978-1843410638
The little-known story of the women who, in 1914, put aside their fight for the vote to set up a hospital in an abandoned French abbey to treat the appalling injuries sustained on the Western Front.



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Stephen Harding
Da Capo, £17.99
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Telling the nearly unbelievable story of the unlikeliest battle of WWII, when a small group of American tankers joined forces with German soldiers to fight off fanatical SS troops.

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Stephen Walsh
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A comprehensive account of one of the defining battles of WWII, which saw the destruction of the German Sixth Army and turned the tide of war against the Nazis.

The Tigers of Bastogne: voices of the 10th Armored Division in the Battle of the Bulge

Michael Collins & Martin King
Casemate, £20
ISBN 978-1612001814
The untold story of the US armoured troops who helped stave off Germany's greatest Panzer onslaught in the West during the Battle of the Bulge.

The Viking Blitzkrieg: AD 789-1098

Martyn Whittock & Hannah Whittock
The History Press, £16.99
ISBN 978-0752467993
Martyn and Hannah Whittock argue that without the Viking wars, there would have been no rise of the Godwin family, no Norman connection, and, as a result, no united England in the 10th century.

Hell on Earth: Sandakan – Australia's greatest war tragedy

Michele Cunningham
Hachette Australia, $35
ISBN 978-0733629891
The story of the Australians who, after the fall of Singapore in 1942, were brutally imprisoned in Sandakan, the Japanese PoW camp in North Borneo whose name came to symbolise cruelty and ill-treatment.

A Great and Glorious Adventure

Gordon Corrigan
Atlantic Books, £30
ISBN 978-1848879263

This military history of the Hundred Years War is written very much with an English bias. Early on, author Gordon Corrigan makes it clear that he feels England's demands on France were lawful and justified. There are occasions when this pro-English stance borders on Francophobia. And it is not just the French who incur the author's wrath, who highlights the 'annoying habit of the Scots to ally themselves with France', conveniently forgetting how England often bullied her northern neighbour.

While Corrigan does not challenge public perception of the Hundred Years War, as he did those of the First and Second World Wars in *Mud, Blood and Poppycock* and *Blood, Sweat and Arrogance* respectively, he does at least place the fighting in its proper context: a series of campaigns fought across more than 100 years during a time of Black Death, peasant revolts, and religious schism. And it is Corrigan's discussion of the costs of the fighting which are perhaps the most enlightening.

The Hundred Years War transformed English warfare. Following the humiliating aftermath of Bannockburn, the English Army became arguably the most effective fighting machine in Europe. Of course, it was not just the English who learnt from their experiences. The French eventually learnt (then sometimes forgot again) that there were other ways to combat the English *chevauchée* and avoided disastrous pitched battles. Indeed, ultimately it was France who embraced artillery and turned it into a war-winning weapon. Despite the English wins, it was France who emerged victorious in October 1453. Not for the last time England proved itself unable to hold the lands it conquered.

To Corrigan, all the heroes are English (Henry V was the 'greatest Englishman that ever lived') and Jeanne d'Arc is a witch. He is something of a Plantagenet propagandist, justifying and excusing what might today be described as war-crimes. But these irritations aside, it is a lively and readable account, and a decent introduction to the Hundred Years War.

David Flintham

The Passion of Max von Oppenheim: archaeology and intrigue in the Middle East from Wilhelm II to Hitler

Lionel Gossman
Open Book Publishers, £15.95
ISBN 978-1909254206

On 8 November 1898, Kaiser Wilhelm II addressed the throng in Damascus. 'Let his majesty the Sultan be assured that the German Emperor will always remain their friend.' The speech was a blatant challenge to Great Britain and had been orchestrated by Baron Max von Oppenheim, chief Middle East expert in the Auswärtiges Amt, Germany's Foreign Office. Oppenheim was a noted archaeologist of part-Jewish origin, who, in the First World War, was to play a major role in promoting pan-Islamism and giving an impetus for Indian and Muslim nationalism.

Within a fortnight of Germany's declaration of war in August 1914, Oppenheim put forward his ideas in a memorandum to the Chancellor: 'It will not be until the Turks enter Egypt and the fires of revolt flame up in India that England will be ripe for destruction.' Oppenheim was in the Middle East when, in November 1914, the Caliph issued a declaration of jihad which, it turned out, had been masterminded largely under Oppenheim's guidance and encouragement.

The plan was for a qualified jihad against the enemies of Islam – Britain, France, and Russia, conveniently omitting Germany. Oppenheim's plans were frustrated by T E Lawrence, an acquaintance from his former days in the desert, when both were engaged in excavations. Lawrence took a violent dislike to the German, to whom he referred rather uncharitably as 'the little Jew-German-millionaire… He was such a horrible person.'

Oppenheim's role as a Middle East plotter carried on into the Nazi era, when he was 'quite actively involved in… negotiations between leaders of the Third Reich and leaders of the pro-Axis Arab independence and unity movements'. His aim was to foment revolution, 'first in Syria, to counteract British plans to occupy that country, then in neighbouring Arab lands'.

Oppenheim, of whom we knew little before the publication of Gossman's book, lived an adventurous life as diplomat, scholar, and explorer. A brilliant yet enigmatic character, he died in 1946 at age 86, still writing up his archaeological discoveries.

Jules Stewart

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There is no doubt that hindsight is a wonderful thing and over 150 years from the start of the American Civil War, the debates still rage both North and South and this side of the Atlantic. Over 60 years ago, a small group of University students based in Portsmouth got together to seek out and share their knowledge of that conflict. Little did they realise their group would grow into the American Civil War Round Table of the UK.

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COMING SOON IN MILITARY HISTORY MONTHLY

THE BLACK PRINCE AT POITIERS

Having travelled the ground, author **Peter Hoskins** revisits one of Medieval England's greatest battlefield triumphs.

PLUS all of your regulars:

- News
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- War Culture
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- War on Film
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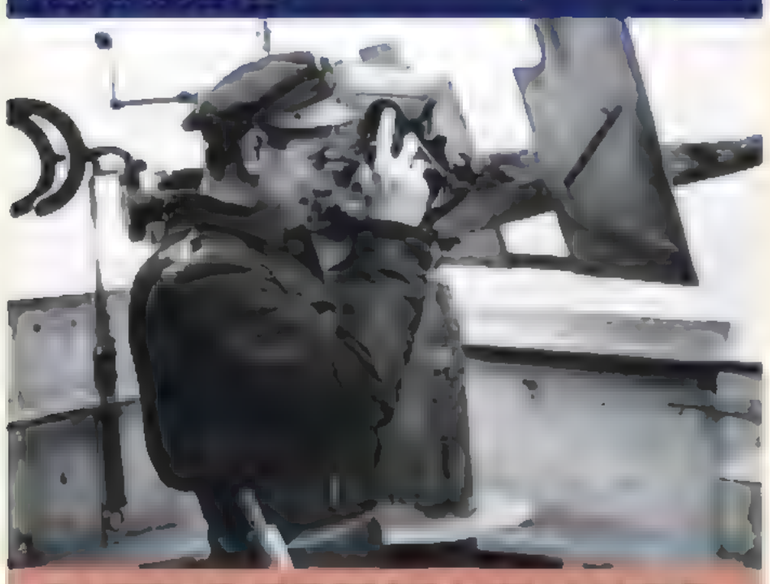
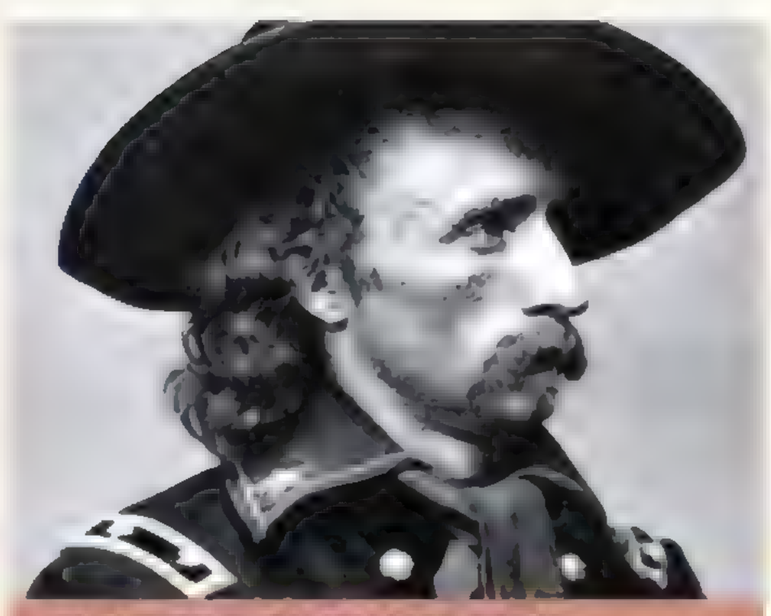
- Reviews
- Back to the Drawing Board

GRAND STRATEGY 1943



BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

Neil Faulkner continues his three-part analysis of the British war effort in the middle years of WWII.



CUSTER BEFORE THE LITTLE BIG HORN

Robert Bateman analyses the chequered and flamboyant career that culminated in the greatest US defeat of the Indian Wars.

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FLODDEN

Scotland's defeat at Flodden turned into a massacre of the native aristocracy. **Ross Cowan** marks the 500th anniversary with a new analysis of the battle.

LIBYA 1912

ITALY'S HOLLOW VICTORY

Julian Spilsbury completes his two-parter on the last great colonial campaign before WWI.

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COMPETITION

This month we have

5 PRESTIGE BOOKLETS

to give away as first prizes *and*

10 FIRST DAY COVERS AND PRESENTATION PACKS OF STAMPS

as second prizes,
courtesy of the Jersey Post.

Military vehicles have been part of Island life since the start of the five year military occupation of Jersey by the German army. At the end of WWII, many of the vehicles were left behind, others were shipped over from the UK and collectors began to restore them, driving them around the Island and taking part at local events to encourage awareness as well as raising money for war-related charities. One such charity is Holidays for Heroes Jersey (H4HJ), which was formed in 2008 to respond to the respite needs of those injured by their military service by allowing then to benefit from the holiday facilities Jersey has to offer. It is actively supported by its patron, the Lieutenant Governor of Jersey, His Excellency General Sir John McColl and two Ambassadors, English Rugby International and Jerseyman, Mr Matt Banahan and Falklands Veteran Mr Simon Weston OBE. Six stamps depict a selection of Jersey's privately-owned military vehicles and the H4HJ logo. Our Prestige Booklet (priced at £15.84) contains four panes of stamps together with additional artwork and informative text.

Jersey Post is pleased to announce that 5% of its philatelic sales of the Military Vehicles issue will be donated to Holidays for Heroes Jersey.

www.jerseystamps.com
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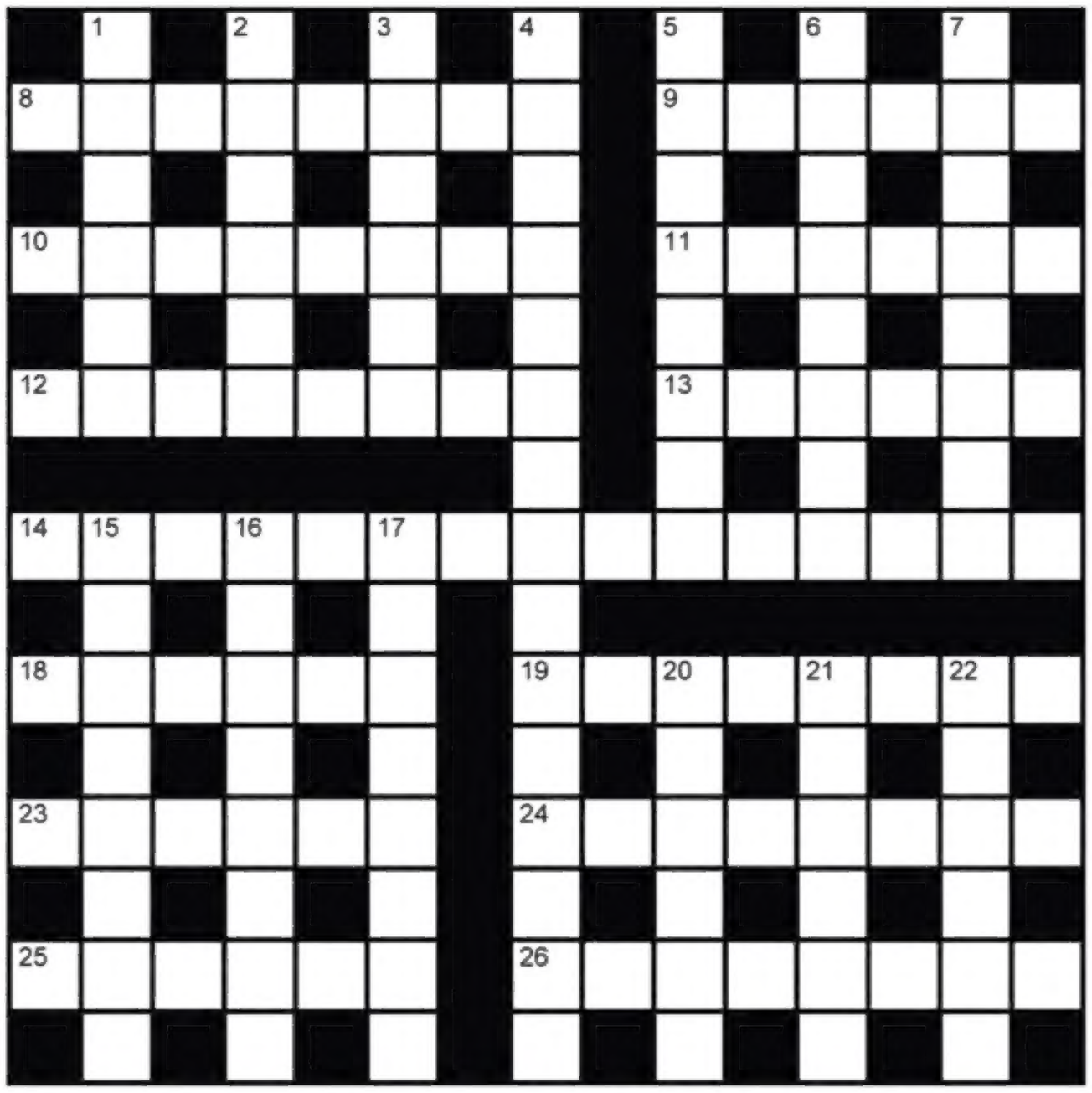
To be in with a chance of winning, just answer the following questions at ***www.military-history.org***:

1. When was the island of Jersey occupied by the German army?
2. What does the abbreviation HMMWV stand for?

TO ENTER THE QUIZ go to *www.military-history.org*



MHM CROSSWORD

Test your military history knowledge in our regular crossword.
The answers will be revealed in next month's issue of *MHM*.

ACROSS

7 Ancient Greek city-state renowned for its military prowess (6)

8 Banastre ___, English cavalry officer who served with distinction in the American Revolutionary War, later MP for Liverpool (8)

9 American Civil War battle, also known as Sharpsburg (8)

10 Hammond ___, British novelist who served in the Royal Artillery during World War Two (5)

11 Italian town whose forces fought those of Bologna at the Battle of Zappolino in 1325 (6)

12 ___ Keppel, First Lord of the Admiralty from 1782 to 1783 (8)

13 Bomber built by Douglas which served in World War Two, Korea and Vietnam (7)

15 Duke of ___, illegitimate son of James II, appointed a Marshal of France in 1706 (7)

19 Saxon king mortally wounded at the Battle of Merton in 871 (8)

22 Centaur-class aircraft carrier launched in 1947 (6)

24 ___'s Nek, battle of the First Boer War (5)

25 Richard ___, Royal Navy captain, later admiral, who captured a French squadron at the Battle of Cape Ortegal several weeks after Trafalgar (8)

26 Naval battle fought in the Far East in May 1942 (5,3)

27 Middle Eastern kingdom defeated by Assyria in 714 BC (6)

DOWN

1 Shafted weapon carried by some infantry officers in the 17th and 18th century

2 uided missile flying at low altitude (6)

3 Rome's opponent during the Punic Wars (8)

4 ___ Hale, US brigadier general who served in the Spanish-American War, later founding the Veterans of Foreign Wars organization (6)

5 ___ Mountain, American Civil War battle fought in Georgia in June 1864 (8)

6 Japanese island planned to be invaded in March 1946 during Operation Coronet, had Japan not surrendered earlier (6)

8 Supersonic fighter aircraft built by Grumman (6)

14 North ___ Aviation, company who built the Mustang fighter and B-25 Mitchell bomber (8)

16 Adolf Hitler's mistress (3,5)

17 ___ Firth, where the Invergordon Mutiny took place in 1931 (8)

18 Black Sea port gained by Russia following the Treaty of Jassy in 1792 (6)

20 John ___, Earl of Shrewsbury, killed at the Battle of Castillon in 1453 (6)

21 City on the Adriatic which surrendered to French forces in 1806 (6)

23 John ___, writer and war correspondent for The Times during World War One, and later an officer in the Intelligence Corps (6)

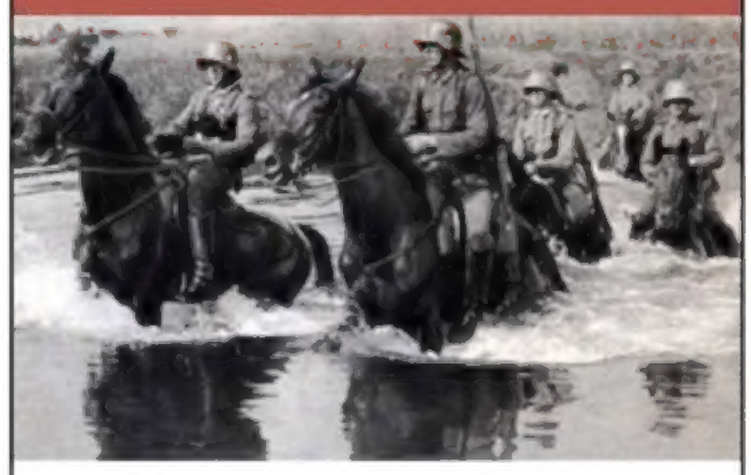
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Now you can have your opinions on everything *MHM* heard online as well as in print. Follow us on **Twitter@ MilHistMonthly**, or take a look at our Facebook page for daily news, books, and article updates at **www.facebook.com/ MilitaryHistoryMonthly**.

Think you have spotted an error? Disagree with a viewpoint? Enjoying the mag? Visit **www.military-history.org** to post your comments on a wide range of different articles. Alternatively, send an email to *feedback@military-history.org*.

ADD US NOW
and have your say

CAPTION COMPETITION



We continue our online caption competition with an image from our Poland Blitzkrieg feature. Pit your wit against *MHM* readers at **www.military-history.org/competitions**.

WINNER:

Is that a regiment of Hooker's on the horizon sir?
No Corporal..... soldiers!
Jason Ollis

RUNNERS-UP:

You could be right, looks remarkably like a Crested Woodpecker to me as well.
John Coogan

Is that Jeb Stuart out there?
he must be crazy if he thinks he can take me from the rear.
Could be General sir, if he knows whats good for him he should steer clear of your little round top!
Mick Wyatt

Think you can do better?

Log onto ***www.military-history.org/competitions*** to enter the next CAPTION COMPETITION. Flex your funny bone and be in with a chance of getting your caption published in the next issue of *Military History Monthly*!

ANSWERS

AUGUST ISSUE | MHM35

ACROSS **8** Mata Hari, **9** Aurand, **10** Catholic, **11** Sagger, **12** Ballista, **13** Ireton, **14** Above Us The Waves, **18** Zagreb, **19** Agricola, **23** Assisi, **24** Rhuddlan, **25** Rising, **26** Egyptian.

DOWN **1** Zapata, **2** Cashel, **3** Wallis, **4** Aircraft carrier, **5** Warspite, **6** Drogheda, **7** Antelope, **15** Bearskin, **16** Virginia, **17** Uxbridge, **20** Ryukyu, **21** Cadets, **22** Llamas.

The Varnished Guaranteed Coffin

Above An LaGG-3 shot down in front of a Ukraine theatre.

Named after its designers, Lavochkin, Gorbunov, and Gudkov, the LaGG-3 fighter was one of the most modern aircraft available to Soviet pilots when Nazi Germany invaded Russia in 1941. Like the De Havilland Mosquito, it was constructed almost entirely from wood, although for different reasons.

Gorbunov wanted to save on strategic materials (e.g. aluminium) rather than weight, so the LaGG-3 featured neither frameless monocoque fuselage nor laminated sheets of Ecuadorean balsa wood sandwiched between sheets of Canadian birch. Instead, its robust timber airframe was covered in plywood, and its crucial parts coated with a Bakelite lacquer, making it as heavy as an all-metal aircraft.

Rushed into production to meet the threat from the Luftwaffe's modern fighters, the LaGG-3 had a poor power-to-weight ratio that made it slow, unresponsive, and tricky to handle. Soviet pilots soon joked that its LaGG designation stood for *Lakirovanny Garantirovanny Grob* – the Varnished Guaranteed Coffin.

Based on the prototype LaGG-1, the design team specified the latest 1,350 horsepower Klimov M-106 engine for their new model. But this proved unreliable due to issues with its cooling system, so they had to settle for the tried and tested 1,050 horsepower M-105P.

Significantly underpowered compared to the Messerschmitt Bf109, the LaGG-3 could, at least, match its firepower: 20mm ShVAK cannon and two 12.7mm Berezin BS machine guns, however, only added to the aircraft's weight problem.

The LaGG-3 was therefore not only slower than the Bf109 that it faced (357mph top speed compared to 398mph), but it also had a slower rate of climb (by as much as 50% from ground level). And these were not the LaGG-3's only shortcomings. It did not respond well to the joystick, had a tendency to flip into a spin when pulled into a steep bank, and would also stall without warning at landing speeds.

> It had a tendency to flip into a spin, and would stall without warning at landing speeds.

As if that was not enough for Soviet pilots to contend with, the drive for mass production – up to 12 planes were rolled off the production-line daily – led to serious quality control issues. Some aircraft were reportedly 25mph slower than they should have been, and the cockpit glazing on early models was so poor that pilots dispensed with the canopy altogether. This not only made their job uncomfortable, but further reduced speed. Although the wood-laminate fuselage and wings were rot-proof and incombustible, they would shatter when hit with high explosive rounds.

Lavochkin fell out of favour with Stalin due to the deficiencies of his design, but worked unofficially during the winter of 1941-1942, with Gorbunov but without Gudkov, to find a solution. They adapted the nose to accept the 1,850hp Shvetsov ASh-82 radial engine, and armed the plane with twin 20mm cannon, while retaining the original airframe. This transformed the aircraft and, with a top speed now in excess of 400mph, the revised La-5 proved to be one of Soviet Russia's most capable warplanes.

Below An LaGG-3 fighter plane.

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The events of the Battle of Vitoria became known in all of Europe and Ludwig Van Beethoven dedicated a symphony to the city.

www.vitoria-gasteiz.org/turismo